

Communist Party, which is part of Mr. Sadr's alliance. "But actions speak louder than words. He's not the same Moktada al-Sadr."

The change in Mr. Sadr was prompted by the political and security crisis set off by the Islamic State's takeover of large parts of northern and western Iraq in 2014, according to Sheikh Saleh al-Obeidi, Mr. Sadr's spokesman. The ensuing violence led to an overwhelming shift in the public mood: a feeling that sectarianism was at the root of much of the country's suffering.

Mr. Sadr, the scion of an eminent clerical family, has portrayed his changed political philosophy in starkly pragmatic terms.

In his only extensive interview before the elections, given to his own television channel, Mr. Sadr put forth a manifesto largely adopted from his new secularist allies. He said his goals were to put professionals — not partisan loyalists — into positions of power as a way to build national institutions that serve the people instead of political insiders.

"We have tried the Islamists and they failed terribly," Mr. Sadr said, a rebuke that his aides said included his own movement. "So let us try another way in which the independent technocrat or independent Islamist or secular technocrat, whoever is best for the job, takes over a ministry and makes it productive. We should try that."

Whether Mr. Sadr can succeed with his reform agenda is an open question, said Joost Hiltermann, the director of the International Crisis Group's Middle East program, as building a majority coalition will mean partnering with some of the established faces that voters expressed dissatisfaction with at the polls. Those other politicians "have much to lose from an effort to curb corruption," Mr. Hiltermann said.

In addition to this new domestic philosophy, Mr. Sadr, 45, has honed an "Iraq First" foreign policy.

He has expanded his once singular anti-American focus to include diatribes against Iran. He also has built bridges with close American allies in the Arab world, like Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia.

The Mr. Sadr of today, his aides say, is remarkably different from the one President George W. Bush called America's greatest enemy in Iraq, on a par with Al Qaeda.

Diplomats from several Western countries, including ones whose coalition troops were killed by Mr. Sadr's militia, have met with him and say they are looking for ways to work with the newly influential leader. They are ready to draw the curtain on past events, they said, in hopes of finding common ground over containing Iran's influence in Iraq.

But many Iraqis are not convinced his that new stance is here to stay.

Among them are several senior commanders in the Iraqi security forces who are trying to build a centralized chain of command at the expense of sectarian militias. Those militias have enhanced their standing because of their role in

helping defeat the Islamic State, but continue to have a reputation for lawlessness.

In the week since the election, several senior political rivals of Sairoon have privately criticized of Mr. Sadr, citing his militia's long record of violence. None would speak publicly, however, given the delicate political jockeying underway to build a coalition government.

The broader Sunni population remains wary of Mr. Sadr. But many Sunnis did give their vote to Mr. Abadi's bloc, so a governing coalition that includes both sides would represent a significant bridging of the country's sectarian divide.

The first time many Iraqis heard the name Moktada al-Sadr was soon after the Americans seized control of Baghdad in 2003. In the post-occupation chaos, Mr. Sadr emerged as a type of Robin Hood, deploying his recently formed militia to distribute food to the poor and defend Shiites against what many came to view as acts of American aggression.

Amid this ferment, a leading Iraqi cleric, Abdel Majid al-Khoei, was killed in the Shiite holy city of Najaf, shocking millions of followers. Many within the Shiite clerical orders believed Mr. Sadr had ordered the killing to settle an old family feud.

The Americans secured an arrest warrant for Mr. Sadr, but found no one in the new Shiite political leadership willing to support his detention, according to Iraqi and American officials. Mr. Sadr has denied any wrongdoing.

American officials came to believe that their reluctance to confront Mr. Sadr reflected a tacit acceptance of the sectarian warfare waged by his militia against Iraqi Sunnis.

Over time, respect for Mr. Sadr's militia among many Iraqis turned to revulsion. Units became known for Mafia-style protection rackets, kidnappings and extortion, even in Shiite neighborhoods. A growing backlash prompted Mr. Sadr to leave for Iran in 2007.

In 2008, while Mr. Sadr was still in Iran, Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki took decisive action. He ordered the Iraqi army to the city of Basra to stem militia violence there. An intense urban battle killed 215 militia members and wounded 600.

The blow sidelined Mr. Sadr for a time. He ordered his militia into hibernation, but pointedly never had his men disarm.

By 2012, Mr. Sadr, who had returned from Iran, had regained enough influence to spearhead a vote of no-confidence against Mr. Maliki, a maneuver that spun Iraq into a new crisis.

Then in 2014, another national crisis erupted: a security collapse as the Islamic State took over one-third of the country.

Mr. Sadr called his militia back to the front lines, but this time as a partner of the diverse Iraqi security forces and the American-led coalition fighting the extremists.

He also turned his attention to a small protest movement organized by leftists and secularists in the capital. The demonstrations in Tahrir Square in Baghdad were on behalf of civil servants and pensioners, and against growing economic inequality and the lack of essentials like electricity and health care.

The protesters were mostly ignored by Iraq's political establishment, but Mr. Sadr viewed their demands as an echo of the plaintive calls of his own base for better jobs and government services. So he looked to build relationships with these groups, despite their diametrically different worldviews.

Mr. Sadr's closest aide, Dhia'a Assadi, called the overtures sincere and logical. "His eminence has always been a voice for the poor," Mr. Assadi said. "He saw that it was to the benefit for all Iraqis for those who share principles to come together."

For the last two years, supporters of Mr. Sadr have banded together with communists, intellectuals and community activists in protest rallies, efforts that have built mutual respect.

Last fall, the Communist Party leadership visited Mr. Sadr at his headquarters in Najaf, the home of Iraq's clerical establishment. Mr. Fahmi, one of the Communist leaders, said several of his comrades were initially cool to the idea of joining forces with someone perceived to have so much blood on his hands.

In the end, most members accepted that if radical political change was going to work in Iraq, it needed a popular leader to bring the masses on board.

"So what if Moktada al-Sadr is now the face of reform?" Mr. Fahmi said. "What should I care as long as the reforms happen? He's a man who can motivate millions."

"If our society improves because of him," he added, "I'll be the first one to congratulate him."

Iraq's Al-Sadr, Promising Reform, Is Constrained By Iran

By Qassim Abdul-Zahra And Philip Issa

Associated Press, May 20, 2018

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq's Muqtada al-Sadr, the maverick Shiite cleric whose political coalition beat out Iran's favored candidates to come in first in national elections, says he wants to form a government that puts Iraqis first.

The electoral commission announced early Saturday that the militant-turned-populist preacher, who has long spoken out against both Iranian and U.S. influence in Iraq, had defeated his establishment rivals.

Al-Sadr — who is remembered for leading an insurgency against U.S. forces after the 2003 invasion — did

not run for a seat himself and is unlikely to become prime minister, but will command a significant number of seats and has already begun informal talks about government formation.

Salah al-Obeidi, a spokesman for al-Sadr's Sa'eron political bloc, told The Associated Press that Iraq's sovereignty was going to be the new government's "guiding principle."

"We warn any other country that wants to involve itself in Iraqi politics not to cross the Iraqi people," he said.

However, even as al-Sadr is in position to nominate a prime minister and set the political agenda for the next four years, he will find his choices limited by Iran.

The Middle East's pre-eminent Shiite power has a direct line with some of Iraq's most powerful politicians, and it is trying to rally them as a bloc to undercut al-Sadr.

Al-Sadr's rise threatens Iran's claim to speak on behalf of Iraq's Shiite majority, a precedent that could fuel independent Shiite movements elsewhere. Also at stake are top ministerial posts — political appointments that are a source of patronage and police and military power.

Al-Sadr himself has kept a relatively low public profile. But in a public relations move that appeared to be directed at Iran, he appeared on Thursday with rival cleric Ammar al-Hakim, who has drifted away from Iran's orbit in recent years, to say the two men share similar visions for the next government.

Tehran has dispatched its top regional military commander, Gen. Qassem Soleimani, to pull together a coalition to counterbalance al-Sadr, according to an Iraqi Shiite militia commander who is familiar with the meetings.

"Iran won't accept the creation of a Shiite bloc that is a threat to its interests. It's a red line," said the commander, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the discussions.

Al-Sadr's relationship with Iran is a complicated one. Though he has maintained close ties with Iran's political and religious leadership, in recent years he has denounced the flow of Iranian munitions to Shiite militias in Iraq, all the while maintaining his own so-called Peace Brigades in the holy city of Samarra, north of Baghdad.

Al-Sadr's former Mehdi Army militia, which spearheaded an insurgency against the U.S., clashed violently with the Iran-backed Badr Organization last decade.

The militias plugged the gaps left by Iraq's army as soldiers deserted their posts in the face of the Islamic State group's lightning campaign in the summer of 2014. With direction from Iran's Revolutionary Guard, they turned the tide against the initial advance. In the years that followed, the militias — coordinating with U.S.-backed Iraqi ground forces — slowly pushed IS fighters back. Iraq declared victory over the group last year.

Al-Sadr has said he wants the militias absorbed into the national security forces, a move Iran would find difficult to accept.

Iran is also rankled by al-Sadr's recent overtures to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which are locked in proxy wars with Tehran in Syria and Yemen. Al-Sadr met with the crown princes of Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi in August, leading Iran's hard-line Keyhan newspaper to accuse al-Sadr of "selling himself" to the house of Saud.

It is unlikely al-Sadr can pull together a governing coalition without Iran-aligned political groups, which have the votes to form their own alliance that could challenge al-Sadr's right to name a prime minister.

An electoral alliance of the militias called Fatah, headed by Hadi al-Amiri, the commander of the Badr Organization, won just seven seats fewer than al-Sadr's bloc. Sa'eron won 54 seats in Iraq's 329-seat national assembly, a far cry from the 165 required to claim a majority.

The militias control the powerful Interior Ministry in the outgoing government and will expect a similar position of influence in the new one.

Al-Sadr seems inclined to woo incumbent Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who is seen as a centrist when it comes to Iranian and U.S. interests, and who appears to be wavering between al-Sadr and al-Amiri.

But Tehran still holds considerable sway with al-Abadi's al-Nasr bloc, which includes several Iran-aligned figures, including one newly minted deputy who has come under U.S. sanctions for allegedly financing Iran's Revolutionary Guard.

Iran's political allies in Iraq will try to pressure those figures into deserting al-Abadi and collapsing an al-Sadr alliance if the formulation is not to Tehran's liking, said a Western diplomat who has been speaking to the sides involved. The diplomat spoke on the condition of anonymity because of media regulations.

That gives Iran — and al-Abadi — leverage over al-Sadr to moderate his positions on the militias and Iran.

Hanging above the talks is the implied threat by all sides to mobilize their followers — and militias — if they feel they are being shortchanged. The collective effect could be to push al-Sadr's bloc toward a broader governing coalition that would dilute his reform agenda.

His top showing at the ballot box means the next prime minister will have to introduce a civil service law that al-Sadr has championed as an antidote to Iraq's endemic corruption, said Kirk Sowell, the publisher of Inside Iraqi Politics, a political and security newsletter. But that doesn't mean the Cabinet or parliament will sign off on it.

"There's not going to be a functioning majority," said Sowell. "It'll be a hodge-podge, coalition government, and it's not going to be any more stable than the last one."

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US Ambassador To Israel David Friedman: Liberal Media Sides With Hamas Over Trump

By Amb. David Friedman

Fox News, May 20, 2018

This past Monday, the United States at long last opened its embassy to Israel in Jerusalem, Israel's capital. The opening occurred 70 years to the day that Harry Truman led the United States to be the first nation to recognize Israel as a sovereign nation. The event, authorized and directed by President Trump, was a moving tribute to the enduring and unique friendship between our nation and the State of Israel.

Moving our embassy, however, was not just an act of friendship. It was an act that Congress had endorsed. In 1995, both houses of Congress overwhelmingly passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act urging exactly this action. As recently as last year, the United States Senate re-affirmed the Jerusalem Embassy Act by a vote of 90-0. While past government leaders have argued, from time to time, that the embassy should only move as part of a peace deal with the Palestinians, Congress said no such thing.

Past Presidents Clinton, Bush and Obama all campaigned on the pledge that Jerusalem must always be the capital of Israel. Clinton and Bush also promised to move our embassy to Jerusalem. None of them honored their word. President Trump made a similar promise, but, in contrast to his predecessors, he kept it.

The opening ceremony was a beautiful and uplifting event attended by hundreds and watched by millions. As the ceremony proceeded, there were a few sporadic, peaceful protests from among the hundreds of thousands of Arabs living in Jerusalem. The West Bank remained calm.

The apparent success of the embassy's opening ceremony enraged the liberal media. Could this be yet another diplomatic triumph by President Trump? The prospect was unbearable.

Hamas to the rescue. These thugs, acknowledged nearly universally as a terrorist organization, had been rioting in Gaza over the past six weeks for purported reasons not connected to the embassy move. They were more than willing to provide the media with a dark side to an otherwise uplifting story.

No nation in the world allows foreigners to storm its border. Period. When the declared intention of the aggressors is to kill that nation's citizens, it is laughable to even suggest that a forceful response would not ensue.

For weeks, Hamas had been pursuing a direct and unambiguous operation against Israel: On Fridays, after stirring up emotions at weekly prayers, it incited waves of

Gaza residents to violently storm the border with Israel, hoping to break through and kill Israeli citizens and kidnap Israeli soldiers. In addition, given the likelihood that these malign efforts would fail, Hamas also created "kite bombs" painted with swastikas that it launched in Israel's direction when the winds were favorable.

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Regrettably, Hamas convinced impressionable young adults that the border had been breached and directed them to run all the way to Jerusalem and murder their enemies. Thousands unfortunately took up the call and entered harm's way.

Some 60 Gazans, the overwhelming majority of whom were known Hamas terrorists, lost their lives because Hamas turned them into a collective suicide bomb. They constituted a small subset of the aggressors, and many of them were known terrorists. They were neither heroes nor the peaceful protesters they were advertised to be.

At least not before the liberal media entered the scene. Desperate for a narrative to discredit the president's decision to move our embassy to Jerusalem, they broadcast the opening ceremony on a split screen simultaneously displaying the Gaza riots, and condemned the insensitivity of the ceremony's participants to the carnage that seemed next door on TV but which in actuality was occurring 60 miles away!

The next day, the liberal media vilified everyone associated with the embassy move and glorified the poor Hamas terrorists. Failed diplomats who never brought peace or stability to the region were pulled out of mothballs to regurgitate their calcified thinking. And the most deranged even accused the administration of having blood on its hands. Tellingly, not a single pundit offered a less-lethal alternative to protecting Israel from being overrun by killers or its soldiers from being within range of pistols, IEDs or Molotov cocktails.

Let there be no mistake. Every life is equally precious, whether Jewish, Palestinian or other. But no nation should ever be called upon to sacrifice its own citizens to preserve the lives of aggressive infiltrators intent on murder and mayhem.

Ironically, Hamas had recently woken up to the fact that most responsible journalists were on to its game and Hamas was considering ending its suicidal assaults on the Israeli border. But seeing the opportunity to curry the front page or the A Block from reporters willing to shed a negative light on our president, Hamas enthusiastically launched its youth back into the fire. So who really has blood on their hands?

David Friedman is the U.S. Ambassador to Israel.

The Truth About Hamas And Israel

Dozens of Palestinians died to further the terror group's lies—and the Western media ate it up.

By Ronen Manelis

[Wall Street Journal](#), May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

South Korea, U.S. To Work Closely On Summit After Pyongyang's About-Face

By Jeongmin Kim

[Reuters](#), May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

US, South Korea Reaffirm Commitment To Planning Trump-Kim Meeting

By Mark Moore

[New York Post](#), May 20, 2018

President Trump and his South Korean counterpart reemphasized their commitment to ensure a summit between North Korea and the United States remains on track after the reclusive regime threatened to pull out of the talks, according to a report on Sunday.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Trump spoke for about 20 minutes about the Hermit Kingdom's recent warning that it wouldn't participate in the June 12 meeting in Singapore if the US continues to demand it relinquish its nuclear arsenal.

"The two leaders will work closely and unwaveringly for the successful hosting of the North Korea- U.S. summit set on June 12, including the upcoming South Korea-U.S. summit," Reuters reported, citing the South Korean president's office.

Moon is meeting with Trump at the White House on Tuesday.

After weeks of conciliatory comments by North Korea, President Kim Jong-un's government suddenly shifted its stand, putting both the historic summit between Kim and Trump and further talks between the two Koreas in jeopardy.

Kim's government is balking at the US' insistence that it denuclearize and is seeking an end to joint military operations between the US and South Korea, which North Korea views as a rehearsal for an invasion.

Trump last week took the extraordinary step to assure Kim that if he gives up his nuclear weapons, the US would ensure his protection.

"He'll get protections that would be very strong," the president said last Thursday.

He also said the White House is continuing preparations for the June meeting because North Korea has not yet contacted his administration about scrubbing the talks.

"We have not been told anything," Trump said. "If the meeting happens it happens. And if it doesn't we'll go on to the next step."

Trump, South Korean Leader Commiserate Over Upcoming Summit

By David Nakamura And Carol D. Leonnig
Washington Post, May 20, 2018

President Trump spoke late Saturday to South Korean President Moon Jae-in amid increasing concerns in the White House that North Korea is not serious about striking a deal on denuclearization, which has complicated planning for the upcoming Singapore summit.

On the call, which lasted less than 30 minutes, Trump sought Moon's interpretation of Pyongyang's shift to a harder-line position last week, a sharp contrast to the more positive and constructive tone after Moon met with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un last month, according to a senior U.S. official with knowledge of the conversation.

North Korea's actions in recent days, including its cancellation of a working-level meeting with South Korean officials and a threat to call off Kim's summit with Trump on June 12, has alarmed the Trump administration and created new complications in the preparations, with just over three weeks left. An advance team from the United States is in Singapore to work out logistics, Trump administration officials said.

National security adviser John Bolton has been telling colleagues that he doesn't trust that the summit will go well, and he has reiterated his long-standing belief that he does not trust the North Koreans, a different person familiar with his views said.

Aides emphasized that Trump remains committed to meeting with Kim and that planning is moving forward but that time is running out to nail down an agenda and finalize several outstanding issues. The senior U.S. official said Pyongyang appears to be trying to extract more concessions from the United States before the summit, or to be building a narrative to blame Trump if things go poorly in Singapore or to pull out of the summit entirely.

"People need to get real here after the euphoria of the peace summit" between Moon and Kim, said the U.S. official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private deliberations. The official said the North Koreans have already failed to abide by some of their commitments in the "Panmunjom agreement" that was signed at the inter-Korea summit.

"They're hedging, creating a sub-narrative," the U.S. official said. "They're not backing out yet. Neither is the president. It doesn't look like they want to denuclearize at all."

The official added: "It's true there's more coordination that needs to be done that hasn't been done. There's still time, but not a lot of it."

Among the administration's concerns is that although the Kim regime promised to destroy its nuclear test site, North Korea has not sanctioned any foreign inspectors or journalists to enter the country to confirm that such a process is underway.

Last week, a top Kim aide blasted Bolton, a North Korea hawk who has suggested the United States won't lift economic sanctions until Pyongyang dismantles its nuclear program.

Many foreign policy and nuclear security experts said it remains highly unlikely that North Korea would be willing to abandon its program and that Kim's goal is to establish himself on the world stage as the powerful leader of a nuclear-armed state.

"The North's attitude is a pretty long distance away from what it appeared to be as Moon portrayed," the U.S. official said. "It's looking pretty different from that. It's looking more like the old playbook."

Moon is scheduled to visit Trump at the White House on Tuesday to coordinate strategy ahead of the Singapore summit. A liberal who took office last year, Moon has been an instrumental player in the diplomatic outreach to Pyongyang, having restarted long-dormant talks ahead of the Winter Olympics, which were held in South Korea.

That led to talks between the two countries, during which Kim offered to meet with Trump. The president accepted the invitation in March.

But Trump's decision has been fraught with risk, given that former U.S. diplomats who have negotiated with North Korea under previous administrations have warned that the Kim family regime has a long history of violating international agreements to curb the nation's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

Trump administration officials said they believe Kim, after the remarkable images of him holding hands with Moon at the inter-Korea summit in late April, has shifted back to a harder-line position. Trump said last week that he believes the tone changed after Kim's second visit to Beijing to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

China has accounted for 90 percent of trade with North Korea, and Beijing's cooperation in enacting U.N. Security Council sanctions on North Korea has been a crucial part of the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" strategy.

"Since the China visit, they've moved pretty dramatically, shifted in the last several weeks to North Korea's old position," the U.S. official said.

Inside the West Wing, aides said Trump was upset by Kim's first visit to China in March, ahead of which Beijing did not notify the White House. The president reacted angrily in a

national security meeting, according to an administration official, and Xi later wrote a letter assuaging Trump.

Trump's concerns over China's influence in the summit with Kim were reflected in the president's tweet last week in which he declared that his administration was looking at ways of potentially assisting ZTE, a Chinese phone maker that was struggling in the wake of U.S. economic sanctions.

Trump's public pronouncement was aimed, in part, at trying to keep the Chinese pressure on North Korea, said the administration official, who also spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

On Thursday, Trump tried to reassure Kim that the United States would not seek his ouster in a denuclearization deal, a statement that appeared aimed at trying to keep the summit on track. But Trump also warned that if no deal was made North Korea could suffer the same fate as Libya, whose dictator, Moammar Gaddafi, was overthrown and killed in 2011 after that nation relinquished its nuclear program amid international pressure eight years earlier.

Carol Morello, Josh Dawsey and Julie Tate contributed to this report.

Trump Grappling With Risks Of Proceeding With North Korea Meeting

By David E. Sanger

New York Times, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — President Trump, increasingly concerned that his summit meeting in Singapore next month with North Korea's leader could turn into a political embarrassment, has begun pressing his aides and allies about whether he should take the risk of proceeding with a historic meeting that he had leapt into accepting, according to administration and foreign officials.

Mr. Trump was both surprised and angered by a statement issued on Wednesday by the North's chief nuclear negotiator, who declared that the country would never trade away its nuclear weapons capability in exchange for economic aid, administration officials said. The statement, while a highly familiar tactic by the North, represented a jarring shift in tone after weeks of conciliatory gestures.

On Thursday and Friday, Mr. Trump peppered aides with questions about the wisdom of proceeding, and on Saturday night he called President Moon Jae-in of South Korea to ask why the North's public statement seemed to contradict the private assurances that Mr. Moon had conveyed after he met Kim Jong-un, the 35-year-old dictator of the North, at the Demilitarized Zone in late April.

The president's conversation with Mr. Moon, which was first reported by The Washington Post, came just three days before the South Korean leader was scheduled to arrive in Washington to meet with Mr. Trump on Tuesday. It was a sign of Mr. Trump's discomfort, some officials speculated,

that he could not wait to discuss the issue until Mr. Moon arrived for his meetings here, though there is no indication that the president is considering pulling out of the North Korea talks.

Mr. Trump's aides have grown concerned that the president — who has said that "everyone thinks" he deserves a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts — has signaled that he wants the summit meeting too much. The aides also worry that Mr. Kim, sensing the president's eagerness, is prepared to offer assurances that will fade over time.

Moreover, Mr. Trump's decision this month to withdraw from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal raises the stakes for the North Korea negotiation. If he emerges with anything less than what President Barack Obama got, which in Iran included the verified shipment of 97 percent of all nuclear material out of the country, it will be hard for Mr. Trump to convince anyone other than his base that the negotiation was a success.

The aides are also concerned about what kind of grasp Mr. Trump has on the details of the North Korea program, and what he must insist upon as the key components of denuclearization. Mr. Moon and his aides reported that Mr. Kim seemed highly conversant with all elements of the program when the two men met, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has made similar comments about Mr. Kim, based on his two meetings with him in Pyongyang, the North's capital.

But aides who have recently left the administration say Mr. Trump has resisted the kind of detailed briefings about enrichment capabilities, plutonium reprocessing, nuclear weapons production and missile programs that Mr. Obama and President George W. Bush regularly sat through.

Grappling with North Korea in negotiations is a new experience not just for Mr. Trump, but also for everyone else in the upper ranks of his administration. South Korean officials say that John R. Bolton, Mr. Trump's new national security adviser, has been in near daily contact with his counterpart in Seoul, trying to work out a strategy.

Mr. Bolton has been clear that in his view the president should use the Singapore meeting to declare that the North must give up its entire arsenal and nuclear infrastructure before crippling economic sanctions are eased.

The South has been advocating a more traditional confidence-building approach, in which concessions by the North result in a gradual lifting of sanctions. But Mr. Trump has said he will not repeat that technique, because it led to failure by his four immediate predecessors.

Until now, administration officials have been saying they expect Mr. Kim to agree to denuclearization at the Singapore summit meeting and to set a schedule for a fast down payment over the next six months, which would involve turning over some number of nuclear weapons, closing

production facilities and allowing inspectors to range the country.

Those who have dealt with North Korea most intensively say that expectation will have to be scaled back if Mr. Trump expects success.

"If Trump is truly expecting to see a handover of nuclear weapons in six months, without anything in return, that is very unrealistic," said Joseph Yun, the State Department's North Korea coordinator until he retired a few months ago. He predicted that Mr. Trump would be forced into the kind of step-by-step measures that his predecessors attempted, "because there is no other way."

Mr. Pompeo said on ABC News late last month: "This administration has its eyes wide open. We know the history. We know the risks." He said the only measure of success would be "complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization," a phrase first used in the Bush administration, for which it proved unattainable.

Analysts at the C.I.A., where Mr. Pompeo was director before becoming secretary of state, have warned for years that they do not believe that Mr. Kim would trade away all of his nuclear weapons capability, no matter what the offer from the United States and its allies. But they have said there was a chance that he would suspend testing and give up some of the North's capability — as long as it could be rapidly rebuilt — if he could win the removal of much of the American presence in the region.

"Kim's long-term goal is to come to some sort of big-power agreement with the U.S. and to remove U.S. presence from the peninsula," Yong Suk Lee, the deputy director of the C.I.A.'s Korea mission center, said at a conference at George Washington University in October, when the North was still actively conducting nuclear and missile tests. But he also said he believed there was an inherent conservatism to the North Korean elite that would stop them from provoking American military action.

Mr. Bolton has repeatedly cited the case of Libya, which turned over all of its nuclear-related equipment in 2003, as a model to follow for denuclearization. Libya received promises of economic integration with the West, little of which happened.

In 2011, its leader, Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, was overthrown, dragged from a ditch and killed. The North Koreans noticed, and much of the statement issued last week was a denunciation of Mr. Bolton and a vow never to bend to "great powers" seeking a similar deal.

But when reporters asked Mr. Trump about Libya, he managed, in one stroke, to contradict Mr. Bolton and misconstrue the importance of the trade of the nuclear program for economic rewards.

"The Libyan model isn't a model that we have at all, when we're thinking of North Korea," Mr. Trump said. "If you look at that model with Qaddafi, that was a total decimation.

We went in there to beat him." That referred to Western military intervention in 2011, not to the nuclear disarmament that came eight years before.

"Now that model would take place if we don't make a deal, most likely," Mr. Trump warned, seeming to repeat exactly the threat that the North Koreans had warned against. "But if we make a deal, I think Kim Jong-un is going to be very, very happy."

Mr. Trump may be right: Mr. Kim presumably has many decades ahead of him as North Korea's leader and has much to gain from improved economic conditions. But he would be betting his entire country on any nuclear deal, and most intelligence analyses in recent years have cast doubt that he, or the North Korean elite, would be willing to give up the security provided by nuclear arms.

Michael Green, a professor at Georgetown University and a leading expert on Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that Mr. Kim was looking for something much larger than Mr. Trump was.

"Trump may be preparing for the wrong game: a two-player round of checkers when Kim is steeling for a multiplayer two-board chess match," he wrote. "On one board will be the future of North Korea's nuclear weapons programs, what Trump came to negotiate. On the other will be what Kim and the other participants know is also crucially at stake: the future of geopolitics in northeast Asia." Mr. Kim sees himself as a player in that game long after the Trump administration is over.

Mike Pompeo Set To Announce New U.S. Strategy On Iran

By Dan Boylan

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is expected to announce the administration's new Iran strategy on Monday amid rising tensions across Europe and the Middle East over renewed U.S. efforts to thwart Tehran's nuclear and political ambitions.

Meanwhile, European Union leaders over the weekend continued scrambling to reassure Tehran that despite President Trump's decision earlier this month to scrap the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal and reimpose sanctions, the 28-nation bloc remains committed to salvaging the accord.

After visiting Iranian nuclear officials in Tehran on Saturday, EU Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias Canete said Europe still hoped to strengthen trade with Iran, which maintains crucial oil ties to the continent.

"We have sent a message to our Iranian friends," Mr. Arias Canete told reporters, "that as long as they are sticking to the [nuclear] agreement the Europeans will fulfill their commitment. And they said the same thing on the other side."

Since Mr. Trump's announcement to withdraw on May 8, EU leaders and Russian President Vladimir Putin have pledged to try to keep the Iranian oil trade and investment in the country flowing. Major European companies have begun buckling, however.

Last week, French energy giant Total announced plans to pull out of \$1 billion gas project it launched in Iran in 2017 because of fears renewed U.S. sanctions could impact its business elsewhere. Total officials said the firm will cease its Iranian operation by November unless it can secure waivers to U.S. sanctions.

Leading Danish tanker operator Maersk and German insurer Allianz also announced plans to wind down business in Iran.

Mr. Pompeo is scheduled to speak before the Heritage Foundation in Washington on Monday.

One of his senior advisers, Brian Hook, said the Trump administration views leaving the Iran deal, which was brokered by the Obama White House, as an "opportunity" as opposed to the worries expressed by other world leaders.

Mr. Trump has long criticized the accord as too narrow, focused only on Tehran's nuclear ambitions and not Iranian efforts to influence politics throughout the Middle East.

"We need a new framework that's going to address the totality of Iran's threats," Mr. Hook told reporters in a conference call Friday. "We see an opportunity to counter and address Iran's nuclear and proliferation threats and to create a better nonproliferation and deterrence architecture for Iran and the region."

Since the U.S. announcement to withdraw, Iranian officials have defiantly pledged to soon restart their nuclear program.

However Iranian media has also delicately addressed the possibility that significantly reduced oil sales could tip the balance of power in Iran's faction-ridden political establishment.

In January, massive anti-government protests broke out across the country because of popular anger fueled by economic hardship.

U.S. Sees Strong Shared Interests With EU On Iran Concerns

Reuters, May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

In Bahrain, A Smoldering Insurgency Reveals The Resilience Of Iran's Proxy War

By Souad Mekhennet, Missy Ryan And Shane Harris
Washington Post, May 17, 2018

The Trump administration has vowed to crack down on Iran's support for powerful militias across the Middle East. But a low-level insurgency in the Kingdom of Bahrain represents a different sort of challenge for the United States.

American authorities say insurgent activity in Bahrain, a key hub for U.S. naval operations, has increased over the past year as a handful of Iranian-backed groups armed with smuggled weapons plan attacks against security forces.

Unlike in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria, where large forces supported by Iran are equipped with heavy weaponry and wield increasing political clout, insurgents in Bahrain — where the majority of the population is Shiite — are lightly equipped and operate in cloistered cells as they plot small-scale assaults.

U.S. officials characterize the island nation, with its Sunni Arab leadership, heavy police presence and tiny size, as an inhospitable environment for Iranian-linked operatives, who have freer rein in other countries.

But the officials say that providing arms-length, opportunistic support to Bahraini militants offers Shiite Iran a low-cost opportunity to advance its objectives at a time when its main military effort is directed elsewhere.

"What Bahrain shows is that Iran uses different formulas to support its proxies in each operational environment," said Michael Knights, a scholar at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "Iran's adaptive approaches in each area mean that the U.S. needs to flexibly respond to Tehran's challenge."

The White House has put checking Iran, whose external military presence is at a high-water mark across the region, at the center of its Middle East strategy.

"History has shown that the longer we ignore a threat, the more dangerous that threat becomes," President Trump said in an address last fall announcing his strategy.

Now that the president, whose Iran strategy has been focused chiefly on the Obama administration's nuclear deal with Iran, has withdrawn from that pact, his administration may turn its attention to dealing with Tehran's network of proxy groups.

In Lebanon, Iran's largest proxy force, Hezbollah, has eclipsed Lebanon's armed forces as that country's most effective fighting force. Hezbollah possesses a massive arsenal of missiles and a full-time army of at least 6,000 soldiers.

In neighboring Syria, Iran's deployment of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) personnel and its weaponry shipments have helped tip the civil war in favor of President Bashar al-Assad. In Iraq, Iranian-backed militias have wielded greater political clout since playing a key role in fending off the Islamic State.

In Yemen, an offensive by Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Arab nations has drawn in greater Iranian involvement in support of Shiite Houthi rebels. U.S. officials say a small

number of Iranian and Hezbollah advisers are also assisting Houthi forces employ Iranian-made advanced weapons, such as the Qiam missile, against Saudi Arabia.

Iran denies those allegations.

'A blame game'?

The roots of Bahrain's smoldering insurgency can largely be found in the popular uprising that erupted in 2011 as part of the Arab Spring.

The government's harsh response to protesters, many of them members of the majority-Shiite population demanding greater political rights and economic opportunity, was the beginning of an extended crackdown on opposition figures. Bahraini leaders said they were concerned that Iran would exploit its cultural and religious ties to Bahrain's Shiites to depose the Sunni monarchy, and they framed a spectrum of opposition activity — as varied as Twitter postings and the burning of tires during protests — as evidence of domestic complicity with Iran.

Former U.S. ambassador to Bahrain Thomas Krajeski, who was in the post from 2011 to 2014, said U.S. officials first detected an Iranian role in the uprising when security forces began to be targeted with isolated attacks initially involving homemade bombs and later, authorities believe, arms smuggled into Bahrain by sea.

In the years since, Bahraini authorities have moved to disrupt suspected militant cells and interdict operatives and weapons. U.S. and Bahraini officials say that more recent seizures have included large amounts of C-4 explosives and sophisticated weapons akin to the type Iranian-backed militias used against U.S. military personnel in Iraq after 2003.

Maj. Gen. Tariq al-Hassan, Bahrain's chief of public security, said that groups such as al-Ashtar Brigades and al-Mukhtar Brigades were responsible for 22 deaths and more than 3,500 injuries to policemen since 2011. The death toll is relatively low for an insurgency, but it represents a significant problem in a country of just 1.4 million people.

The Iranian government has denied involvement in Bahrain's internal affairs and accuses the Bahraini government of playing a "blame game."

U.S. and Bahraini officials say Iranian military personnel have not been seen in public in Bahrain as they have been in Syria and Iraq, a reflection of how Iran has adapted its approach to operating in the tightly policed kingdom. Militant operatives are instead trained outside the country, mostly over several days at a time in Iran and Iraq, according to U.S. and Bahraini officials as well as accused militants in Bahrain government custody.

Waiting for instructions

In a response to a request to Bahraini authorities, a Washington Post reporter was permitted to interview a dozen prisoners suspected of militant activity. The prisoners, who

were selected by the government, were made available to The Post for interviews in two state facilities this spring.

The interviews took place without government personnel or lawyers present. Some of the detainees had been convicted; others had not.

One of the detainees, who asked to be identified by his middle name, Ibrahim, told a story that attests to an opportunistic approach to Bahrain by Iran.

Ibrahim, who cited the treatment of Bahraini Shiites as his reason for taking up arms against the Sunni monarchy, said he was recruited by a friend in 2011 and traveled to Iran for four days of training.

When he returned to Bahrain, he was instructed to wait. Six years passed.

When the government of Bahrain resumed capital punishment in 2017 after a seven-year hiatus, Ibrahim said, a contact in Iran urged him to fight. He planned a family vacation to Iran, where he spent part of his days at a small training facility learning to assemble explosives and use AK-47 rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and other weapons.

After returning to Bahrain, he set up a small bombmaking operation in an empty apartment, with materials — C-4, a remote trigger, batteries, wires and money — he picked up at dead drops after exchanging messages with his contact in Iran.

Several weeks after renting the apartment, Ibrahim conducted the first in a series of attacks on police patrols, directed as always, he said, by his contact. At least one Bahraini police officer died as a result of those attacks.

"I did it because people on our side were killed as well," he said.

Other detainees reported similar stories: recruitment by contacts outside Bahrain followed by training in Iran or Iraq, often during trips that coincided with annual pilgrimages that draw Shiites from across the region. One detainee said he was trained by an Iraqi militia, Kataib Hezbollah, in the holy city of Karbala in 2016.

Most of the detainees said the men who trained them did not fully identify themselves. It was not clear whether they were linked to the Iranian government or IRGC.

Another detainee said the men who trained him in Iran laid out a vision for Bahrain as a piece in a larger Shiite uprising: "They spoke about Bahrain and told us, 'You have to fight against these oppressors.' They said we would have to fight the oppression everywhere. They spoke about Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Palestine."

The Post was not able to verify the detainees' accounts or obtain access to other prisoners who may have had different experiences.

Most of the detainees said they carried out nonlethal tasks, such as delivering equipment, weapons, money or messages. Those who admitted to planning attacks described them as involving small, improvised bombs or

small arms, which was consistent with the charges brought by Bahraini authorities.

All of that points to Iran's long game in Bahrain, a bid to position trusted allies who could be activated should another uprising occur, Knights said.

"They're trying to develop a tie to this person," he said. "They're not trying to turn him into Jason Bourne."

'We're not going to cross that line'

American officials describe a "loose command and control relationship" between Bahraini militants and Iran. "The control only goes so far," said one U.S. official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence assessments.

But U.S. officials say Iranian guidance might have helped ensure that no attacks have directly targeted U.S. interests in Bahrain, which is home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet and thousands of American service members, a possible indication of Iran's desire to avoid direct confrontation with the United States.

"There was a sense that the Iranians acted as a brake for these groups, saying, 'We're not going to cross that line,'" Krajewski said.

While American officials remain concerned about the threat from Bahrain's insurgency, they say the government's heavy-handed attempts to quash political opposition have stoked disaffection.

Advocacy groups report that the human rights situation has deteriorated sharply in the past year as Bahrain has taken steps, including resuming the trials of civilians in military courts, that contradict recommendations from an independent panel set up after 2011.

According to Hanan Salah of Human Rights Watch, the Bahraini government has embarked on an unprecedented clampdown on opponents, conducting mass arrests, deporting some activists and stripping others of their citizenship, often using the threat of terrorism as a pretext for silencing dissidents and critics, who include many Shiites.

"The current government is very clearly laying down the law, and there's no space for dissent in this country," Salah said.

Authorities are also accused of mistreating prisoners and failing to provide due process. Several detainees interviewed by The Post said they were tortured and sexually abused in government custody. The Post reported those allegations to a government watchdog, which is investigating.

Israel Vs. Iran: Who Holds The Advantage In An Increasingly Looming War?

By Carlo Muñoz

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

As two of the Middle East's military heavyweights edge closer to a shooting war, Israel boasts one of the world's most

effective militaries backed by a nuclear arsenal, but Iran has 10 times the population and an increasing number of ways to strike back asymmetrically.

The Iran military's total force is reported to be 934,000 active-duty and reserve troops, while the total number of Israeli troops comes in at 615,000, according to figures compiled by GlobalFirepower.com. Expanding the aperture to include all fighting-age citizens, Iran still holds the advantage with over half of the country's population of 84 million eligible to fight, compared with 3.6 million in Israel.

But the age of high-tech warfare and armed drones is where Iran's advantages end in terms of conventional warfare, military analysts say.

In a conventional ground war, Israeli forces would dominate Iran with an arsenal of over 2,700 tanks and heavy artillery against Tehran's force of just over 1,600 heavy ground weapons in total. Israel would hold a similar advantage in the air, with a fleet of nearly 600 fighter jets and attack helicopters, compared with the 500 combat aircraft in the Iranian air force, which consist mostly of trainers, supply helicopters and cargo planes.

Iran's advantages are more indirect, analysts say. The military relies on its ability to enlist proxy forces and target strategic chokepoints to counter Israel's conventional advantages. Iran's prolific abilities to raise, train and equip formidable proxy forces across the Middle East remains the country's greatest advantage.

Iranian-trained Houthi rebels, the Shiite sect waging a civil war against the Yemeni government and its backers in Saudi Arabia, has stood firm in the face of blistering air and ground firepower from the Saudi-led coalition. In Lebanon, the Shiite Hezbollah movement has long been a strategic ally of Tehran and poses a far more formidable enemy for Israel than it did in the brief border war 12 years ago.

Iranian troops and allied militia are well-established in Iraq and Syria, a byproduct of Iran's aid to both countries in the fight against Islamic State. Several Israeli sorties against suspected Iranian outposts inside Syria is one key reason many analysts say the two longtime adversaries are on a collision course.

Shiite Crescent

Israeli officials say Tehran has fostered a 80,000-member proxy force, trained and equipped by Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, inside Syria and is funneling heavy weapons and materiel to those forces via the so-called Shiite Crescent — Iran's long-sought land bridge linking Iran to Lebanon through Syria and northern Iraq. The government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is under pressure from domestic hard-liners and strategists to strike at Iran before it can complete the land bridge.

Should a conflict break out between Iran and Israel, Iranian military commanders could open up multiple fronts against Israel via its proxies in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq,

stretching Israeli forces thin. The introduction of Iranian-built medium- and long-range missiles to those Shiite paramilitaries could make those forces even more formidable to Israel.

"Iran is investing in qualitative improvements to its missiles' accuracy and lethality," according to an analysis by the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies. Tehran "has also become a center for missile proliferation, supplying proxies such as Hezbollah and Syria's al-Assad regime with a steady supply of missiles and rockets, as well as local production capability."

Tehran has no fewer than 16 mid- to long-range missile and artillery systems fielded or in development, with effective ranges upward of 800 miles, the CSIS analysis states. One long-range missile under development by Iran — the Khorramshahr — is estimated to have a range of over 1,200 miles.

The Khorramshahr would be akin to Israel's Jericho-2 missile, which has an estimated range of 900 to 2,100 miles. The Jericho-3 intercontinental ballistic missile has a maximum range of just over 4,000 miles.

Although proxy forces are Iran's best chance to offset Israel's military prowess, Washington and Jerusalem could not rule out the scenario of direct action against Israel, with the influx of Iranian military hardware and a growing presence of Iranian troops in Syria.

"We should really consider it," retired Israeli Maj. Gen. Yaacov Ayish said last week during a teleconference with reporters, held by the Washington-based Jewish Institute for National Security of America.

"At the end of the day, it does not have to be a [conventional] campaign. ... It could just be a drone, a rocket launcher, an air-defense system they are controlling," said Gen. Ayish, who served as Ground Forces Command Chief of Staff and head of operations for Israeli forces.

"This is a whole new ballgame," he added.

Rising tensions

The long-standing shadow war between Iran and Israel has burst violently into the open, with both countries taking unprecedented military action against each other.

Over 30 Israeli fighter jets unleashed a barrage of airstrikes into Syria this month, hammering suspected weapons storage facilities, ammunition depots and intelligence hubs used by Iranian-backed militias and advisers from Tehran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and their paramilitary wing, the Quds Force. It was Israel's largest retaliatory strike since its 2014 war with the militant Palestinian Hamas movement.

Israel claimed pro-Iranian forces had launched a large-scale attack on Israeli military targets in the Golan Heights.

The recent round of strikes and counterstrikes between Israel and Syria marked a blatant escalation of a war that had been carried out "under the radar," Gen. Ayish said. "For

decision-makers [in the region], they should not consider this as the end. I will be very much surprised if the Iranians will give up so easily."

Iran's relatively muted official response, analysts say, reflects the realization among Tehran's leaders that the country is still not prepared to take on Israel. Iran's political leadership has also been consumed by the fallout from the Trump administration's decision to pull out of the 2015 nuclear deal.

Shipments of missiles and other advanced weaponry to Iranian proxies in Syria in late April put the U.S. and Israel on alert, triggering the chain of events leading up to last week's explosion of violence, retired Israeli Maj. Gen. Yaakov Amidror said during the same teleconference.

Up until then, Israeli forces had been executing a campaign to contain pro-Iran elements in Syria coming too close to Israel's borders, said Gen. Amidror, who served as military secretary for the Defense Ministry. Iranian forces have been in the country to bolster Syrian President Bashar Assad in the country's brutal 7-year-old war, in which Mr. Assad has been scoring major victories.

In April, U.S. Central Command chief Gen. Joseph Votel made a low-key visit to Israel, and Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman and Pentagon chief James Mattis talked later that month. The contacts, Gen. Ayish said, were in direct response to Tehran's efforts in Syria.

"We understood this was the next stage [of escalation]," he said.

Donald Trump's Iran, Korea Policies Take Different Approaches

By Guy Taylor

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

For the world, it has been a tale of two Trumps.

In East Asia, the president is pushing for a fast-paced breakthrough on North Korean nukes, a whirlwind of diplomacy that has spurred talk of a Nobel Peace Prize.

Yet in the Middle East, where his moves on Israel, Syria and Iran have adversaries and some key allies fuming, many blame the administration for disdaining diplomacy and dangerously raising tensions.

By pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal, Mr. Trump delivered on a major campaign promise and triggered a wave of praise from supporters and some regional analysts. They are thrilled that the White House is finally headed by someone who does what says he will without fear of bucking allies and leading on the world stage.

But the outrage over Iran stands in sharp contrast with the thaw Mr. Trump appears bent on quickly achieving with North Korea.

Killing the Iran deal — coupled with relocating the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and calling for a quick

withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria — has set nerves on edge in the foreign policy establishment over the risk of moving too hard and too fast with an "America first" doctrine that chafes some of Washington's longtime international partners.

In both theaters, Mr. Trump in his 15 months in office has swiftly dismantled key aspects of President Obama's foreign policy legacy. He has walked away from the massive Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal and pulled out of the Paris climate agreement. He also has levied tough tariffs on leading trading partners, called out China for its booming surpluses and restrictive trade policies, and vowed to tear up the North American Free Trade Agreement if Mexico and Canada don't agree to major changes, though the deadline for renegotiation passed Thursday.

Critics say the differing approaches in East Asia and the Middle East reflect a foreign policy based on an inexperienced president's impulses and short-term focus that have left the U.S. isolated, but some say the establishment has it backward.

"Trump is not isolating the U.S. internationally; he's actually reasserting the U.S. as a power broker again," said Michael Pregent, a senior fellow and Middle East analyst with the Hudson Institute think tank in Washington.

"Everything the president has done so far has been accompanied by dire warnings of catastrophe by the groupthink in Washington, D.C., when actually the opposite has happened," Mr. Pregent said in an interview.

"North Korea is making overtures, China and Russia are helping us with North Korea. We pulled out of the Iran deal, and Europe is going to pick working with us, the \$20 trillion economy, over sticking with Iran, the \$400 billion economy."

Mr. Pregent did express concern that Mr. Trump has yet to formulate a long-term strategy for Iraq and Syria — and cautioned that the administration should be wary of making "bumper sticker" claims of foreign policy successes — but he said it's absurd to see "the consensus among the establishment is that the president has no strategy on anything."

"He may not have a strategy the way Washington would want him to have one," said Mr. Pregent. "But he has goals and, in that, strategy is developed by the people who work with him."

Critics see attempts to paper over the reality that Mr. Trump has burned through a secretary of state, two national security advisers, a chief of staff, a chief White House strategist and a top economic adviser with well more than half his term to go.

"We have foreign policy by impulse, not by conscious thought. Trump is a rogue elephant, crashing into the structure of the international system and breaking things

without a plan," said Gordon Adams, a longtime foreign policy professor at American University.

Mr. Trump's stunning decision to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un face to face to discuss a peace deal faces a cloudy future, Mr. Adams said, while his disruptive moves in the Middle East have produced a backlash.

"There is no way of knowing whether the North Korea talks will lead to something or not, and Trump threw away his premature Nobel Peace Prize when he stepped away from the [Iran deal], leaving further turmoil in the Middle East, alienating our allies and increasing the risk of war," Mr. Adams said. "Trump's impulses are for show, not for strategic purpose. There is no sign of a strategy here at all. By walking away from TPP, the Paris climate agreement and [the Iran deal], what he has done is sacrifice U.S. global leadership."

With the world rebalancing at a rapid pace amid the rise of China, Mr. Adams said, the "erosion of U.S. power and the U.S. role is permanent, not temporary."

Risk and reward

Given the sharp swerve since Mr. Trump took power, the foreign policy establishment has struggled to explain Mr. Trump's moves, a task made harder by the biting political climate in Washington.

"As with a lot of things in this presidency, there is the strategic explanation for actions being taken and then probably the correct explanation," said Hal Brands, a former high-level Pentagon strategist who teaches global affairs at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies.

"You can tell a story where getting out of the Iran deal is part of a larger strategy premised on the idea that we're going to bring the Iranian regime to its knees using harder sanctions," said Mr. Brands. "But you can also tell a story where the president just doesn't like the Iran deal because it was negotiated by Obama."

"My view is that the latter is probably true, and if that's the case, it may be a mistake to search for coherence across President Trump's foreign policy across different regions," he said.

But some argue that the president is free to charge ahead with his "America first" doctrine now that several early, more cautious advisers are no longer on the team.

Rex W. Tillerson, who as secretary of state favored staying in the Paris climate accord and the Iran deal, was fired. Gary Cohn quit his post as chief economics adviser after battling with the president on whether to impose tariffs on China.

H.R. McMaster resigned as national security adviser in March and was replaced by the far more hawkish John R. Bolton. As a private analyst, Mr. Bolton argued that America needed a more robust posture globally including, where

necessary, the use of military force and the willingness to change regimes that are hostile to vital U.S. interests.

A senior White House national security official said it's ridiculous to say the churning of aides explains Mr. Trump's increasingly assertive stances and willingness to challenge the Washington foreign policy establishment.

"The president does what he says he's going to do," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity with The Times. "The fact that this continually shocks people says more about the state of our politics than the state of the administration.

"America first doesn't mean America alone," the official added, calling that argument "one of the knee-jerk criticisms out there."

"What 'America first' means is: 'How are we serving the American people, and is our foreign policy serving the American people?'"

Some longtime foreign policy operatives say Mr. Trump's impacts on world crises will take a long time to evaluate, particularly given the dramatic changes he seeks to impose. And some deep forces are moving forward no matter who occupies the Oval Office.

"For all the attention drawn to this president's daily actions, the metrics of American strength are financial solvency, public ethics, a vibrant middle class, shared civic responsibility and a sense of higher purpose in the world," said Lincoln Bloomfield, a chairman emeritus of the Stimson Center in Washington.

Mr. Bloomfield, who served in security posts in the Reagan and both Bush administrations, said in an interview that "the international goal posts are geopolitical."

Among them: "Responding effectively to Russia's and China's illegal territorial expansion; addressing nuclear and ballistic missile threats from North Korea and Iran; eliminating sources of support for terrorism, extremism and violent non-state actors; and reversing the dangerous anti-democratic tide in the world."

"As sports fans know, the play-by-play and rhetorical jousting are entertaining," Mr. Bloomfield said. "But in the end, all that counts are the points on the board. For that we have to stay tuned."

NYU Abu Dhabi Blocks Journalists From Filming John Kerry

By Jon Gambrell

Associated Press, May 20, 2018

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday warned that "true civil discourse" is under threat around the world while speaking to graduates at NYU Abu Dhabi, an event that the school blocked journalists from filming.

While obliquely criticizing President Donald Trump, Kerry did not mention the 2015 Iran nuclear deal he secured with other world powers, an accord of which Trump now has pulled America out.

It likely was courtesy to his hosts in the capital of the United Arab Emirates, which long opposed the deal as not going far enough to limit Iran's power in the greater Mideast. Kerry shared the stage with Emirati Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash, who long had led the UAE's criticism of the deal.

"True civil discourse is also under threat all around the planet, eroding rights alongside trust," Kerry said. "Certainly in my country, our politics has become almost all accusatory and all bombastic."

While never naming Trump, Kerry began his remarks by saying: "Given what's going on today, I'm glad to be invited anywhere folks." He quickly added that the U.S. "needs to build partnerships and cannot turn its back on the world."

Andrew Hamilton, president of New York University, also made a point to criticize "disturbing trends of anti-intellectualism and anti-factualism" in the world.

NYU Abu Dhabi invited reporters to cover Kerry's speech, then just before the ceremony said journalists from The Associated Press and others could not film his full remarks. They said the school would offer video that it would editorially control after the event.

A university spokeswoman, Kate Chandler, said it was the school's decision. Staffers for Kerry said they had no part in the organization of the event. The school allowed an AP photographer and writer to attend Kerry's full speech.

This is not the first time NYU Abu Dhabi has faced criticism when trying to balance the ideas of an American liberal arts education in the UAE, which has strict rules governing speech despite being a staunch American ally in the Mideast.

Human rights groups have criticized the school for using migrant workers to build the campus who they say had been subject to a range of violations including being forced to pay recruitment fees to get their jobs that were never reimbursed, living in overcrowded conditions and being forced to work overtime.

Following the report, NYU commissioned an investigation, which found a number of workers hadn't been protected by the fair labor practices the school had said would be in place. The school promised reimbursement. A report released this month said that even though the school investigated its labor compliance, some workers involved in the campus' construction still were owed money and worked in harsh conditions.

The journalism department at New York University in 2017 told the school it was cutting its ties to NYU's Abu Dhabi

campus over two professors being denied work visas by the UAE, as well as the school's handling of the situation.

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36 Local Candidates Have Been Assassinated In Mexico. And The Election Is Still 2 Months Away.

By Kevin Sieff

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

MEXICO CITY — This election season has been the most violent in Mexico's recent history, with 36 candidates killed since September, and dozens of other politicians and campaign officials slaughtered.

That macabre statistic has created a fresh challenge for the country's political parties: They are now trying to fill dozens of candidacies left open by the assassinations.

"There are some positions that no one wants to contest right now," said Eduardo Guerrero, a security expert at Lantia Consultores in Mexico City. "It's something that we're seeing in several states in the country."

Earlier this month, the body of Abel Montufar, a candidate for congress from the state of Guerrero, was found in his truck. He had been shot several times. After Montufar's funeral, members of his party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), began what has become a familiar search.

"We are looking for someone to take over his candidacy," said Heriberto Vazquez, the president of the PRI's steering committee in Guerrero, in an interview. "We are looking for someone without fear."

Vazquez explained the precautions the party is taking as it attempts to recruit replacements. Party officials have drawn up a map of towns and cities so dangerous that candidates are advised to not to campaign there. But because parts of Guerrero are so violent, it's impossible to tell which of the candidates who became victims were targeted, and which were simply caught up in random crime.

So far, roughly 8,000 people have been killed in Mexico this year, a continuation of the horrific violence of 2017, when about 23,000 people were slain, a record. With presidential, parliamentary and local elections scheduled for July 1, the violence has crept into the country's political class.

Mexican newspapers have begun publishing lists of the candidates slain across the country. Political killings have tripled from the 2015 elections, according to research from Lantia Consultores.

Criminal groups are using violence to try to influence candidates, analysts say, and establish their power over local and state politics. In some cases, they might be targeting politicians who have refused to show them deference or pay them off. In other cases, candidates might have formed

alliances with one criminal group, and later been targeted by a rival group.

"The old model was that criminal organizations had to pay rent to politicians for protection from government authorities," said Chris Kyle, an anthropologist and expert on Guerrero at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. "Now, the relationship is the other way around. If you want to occupy office, you have to pay the criminal organizations."

In the case of Montufar, the former congressional candidate, local newspapers are reporting that he was killed for not paying a "cuota" or "share" to a local drug cartel.

His assassination underscored the danger facing politicians in Guerrero. The day after he was killed, Ramiro Gómez Pineda, a candidate for president of the nearby municipality of Coyuca de Catalan and a former member of Montufar's staff, pulled out of his own race. That left yet another candidacy for the party to fill.

Speaking publicly, representatives of the PRI have tried to reassure voters that they will find replacements for such candidates.

"The party is working. It is having the corresponding meetings and consulting to find the best person to replace Abel Montufar and thus have a competitive possibility," Manuel Saavedra Chavez, the party's representative in the electoral institute, told Milenio newspaper.

In Chihuahua state, where several candidates and local officials have been killed since September, the electoral institute announced this month that 80 candidates had resigned. About half of those were replaced.

In Guerrero, more candidates are dropping out every week. In the past few days, two candidates for mayor of the municipality of Pedro Ascencio de Alquisiras withdrew from the race.

One of them was Norma Sanchez Alvarez, the candidate for the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD).

Not long after her withdrawal, the secretary general of the PRD in Guerrero, Antonio Orozco Guadarrama, explained what had happened.

"The criminals threatened our candidate and the other members of the team that if they participated in the [electoral] fight something was going to happen to them," he told Reforma newspaper.

Maduro Wins Venezuela Election Amid Widespread Disillusionment

By William Neuman And Nicholas Casey

New York Times, May 20, 2018

CARACAS, Venezuela — President Nicolás Maduro won a second term as president of Venezuela, a country in the midst of a historic economic collapse marked by soaring prices, widespread hunger, rampant crime, a failing health system and a large-scale exodus of its citizens.

Electoral officials declared Mr. Maduro the victor late Sunday, in a contest that critics said was heavily rigged in his favor.

In the capital and around the country, the turnout appeared to be extremely low, reflecting both a call from many opposition leaders for a boycott of the vote and the disillusionment of longtime government supporters.

Voting centers in pro-government strongholds and opposition areas alike often had no lines of voters waiting to cast ballots — a significant change from previous presidential elections, and a sign Venezuelans repudiated the candidacies of both Mr. Maduro and the two opposition candidates.

Election officials said Mr. Maduro, the political heir of Hugo Chávez, the leftist firebrand who led this oil-rich country until his death in 2013, received 5.8 million votes.

His main rival, Henri Falcón, a former state governor who was once an acolyte of Mr. Chávez but broke with him to join the opposition, received 1.8 million votes. A third candidate, Javier Bertucci, a political novice and an evangelical minister, received 925,000. Mr. Maduro's current term continues until the end of the year; his new term will last six years.

Despite his triumph in a tainted contest, there is little relief in sight for Mr. Maduro or the country.

The United States has threatened stricter sanctions, and other countries, especially Colombia and Brazil, have received huge outflows of economic refugees. Also likely to increase pressure on Mr. Maduro's government even before his next term begins: He has largely been cut off from international financing, and the government-run oil industry, which provides virtually all of the country's hard currency, is in free-fall, with plummeting production.

Some within his own movement may point to the low turnout and vote totals and question his leadership. Mr. Maduro has shown no signs so far that he has the ability to solve the country's deep problems and his response to the crisis has often been to crack down harder on adversaries — including the traditional opposition as well as rivals on his side of the political divide.

The official turnout figure was given as 46 percent.

Recent elections in Venezuela have included charges of fraud, and it was unclear as of Sunday night whether the opposition candidates would challenge the vote count.

The United States and many countries in the region have condemned the election as unfair and anti-democratic and said that they would not recognize the results.

Mr. Maduro's victory was certain to set off a new round of infighting and finger pointing within the opposition. Some blamed Mr. Falcón for giving legitimacy to the president's re-election, while others questioned whether the opposition might have missed a chance to displace Mr. Maduro, given

the his falling popularity among his own supporters, who failed to turn out.

Venezuela, which is estimated to have the world's largest oil reserves, is in the throes of one of the worst economic crises in recent history in the Western Hemisphere. The International Monetary Fund estimates that inflation this year could reach 13,000 percent, by far the highest rate in the world.

With soaring prices and shortages of basic goods of all kinds, many Venezuelans are malnourished. It is common to find families who eat just twice a day, and with little protein, fresh fruit or vegetables in those meals. Two pounds of chicken or beef costs as much as the monthly minimum wage package, which, including food coupons, is worth about \$2.50.

That is hardly a recipe for a president to win re-election, but Mr. Maduro sought to give himself every advantage in Sunday's vote.

The electoral authorities banned the largest opposition political parties from taking part in the election, and key politicians were barred from running.

Brutal repression of anti-government protests, and the arrests of many activists and leaders, has also weakened the opposition.

Electoral authorities also moved up the election to May, allowing little time for the opposition to organize and campaign. They even eliminated the requirement that voters dip a finger in indelible ink, which is used to keep people from voting more than once.

In response, many opposition leaders called for an election boycott.

Mr. Falcón ultimately decided to break with the rest of the opposition and run against Mr. Maduro.

Mr. Maduro blames the country's problems on what he calls an economic war waged against Venezuela by the United States. But most economists place the blame on poor government management, corruption and broken policies, like tight controls over foreign exchange, an overvalued currency and price controls on goods.

The government has responded to the crisis by providing people with boxes of food, including powdered milk and pasta, although most people said they arrive irregularly and do not contain nearly enough to sustain a household. The food boxes have become both an incentive and a threat during the campaign, with many voters fearful that they could be cut off if they don't support the government.

At many polling places on Sunday, people cast their vote and then visited a so-called Red Spot — named for the ruling Socialist Party's color — set up nearby.

At the Red Spot, voters presented the special identity card needed to receive the food boxes and other services and gave their names to workers who were keeping lists of those who had voted. Workers at the Red Spots said that

there was no effort to pressure voters or link a pro-Maduro vote to future food deliveries.

One of the most striking aspects of the day was the large number of voters who appeared to have stayed away.

"I'm surprised by the low turnout," said Loreima Henriquez, a National Electoral Council employee, who was overseeing a polling place in Dos Caminos, a middle-class area of Caracas. There were about 4,200 voters registered to cast ballots there, but by 1 p.m. only 313 had done so. "We were aware of the calls to abstain from voting, but many fewer people than we expected are coming out," Ms. Henriquez said.

Rosa Rodriguez, 50, a former supporter of Mr. Chávez and Mr. Maduro, who said that this time she voted for Mr. Falcón, volunteered to work as a poll watcher. "People are not voting on both sides and I think this is a silent message that they're giving the country today," said Ms. Rodriguez, who lives in a working class area in the center of Caracas. "They have to realize that the people are protesting in silence. For me that says it all."

In a slum abutting the main airport outside Caracas, Marielis Idimas, a mother of two, said that she voted for Mr. Maduro despite the economic hardships — but she showed more resignation than enthusiasm.

"My life is not good," she said, sitting at a small stand where she sold eggs for 60,000 bolivars each (the currency's devaluation makes that only about 6 cents although it is a vast sum for poor Venezuelans). "But who lives comfortably now?"

Another slum resident, María García, 63, said that she did not vote because doing so would be supporting a sham.

"I'm not going to be part of this," Ms. García said. "I hate everything about this government and I don't want anything to do with them."

Venezuela's Maduro Wins Re-Election Amid Opposition Boycott

President extends predecessor's radical leftist movement

By Kejal Vyas And Juan Forero

Wall Street Journal, May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Venezuelans Go To The Polls Amid Calls For A Boycott By Maduro Opponents

By Anthony Faiola

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

Venezuelans went to the polls Sunday in an internationally condemned election that critics call a power grab by President Nicolás Maduro, who is seeking a new six-year term.

This oil-producing nation is facing a near-total societal collapse because of mismanagement, corruption and a crumbling socialist system, fueling widespread hunger and medical shortages that have sparked the largest migrant crisis in modern Latin American history. Traditional opposition parties were barred from fielding candidates and had called for a broad boycott of Sunday's vote amid fears that Maduro is moving to cement dictatorial power.

The government deployed 300,000 troops to keep watch at polling stations across the country. Government officials claimed a high turnout. But an opposition report stated that at 1 p.m., only 25.8 percent of registered voters had cast ballots. At a sampling of a dozen stations in the capital, voting lines were thin to empty after polls opened at 6 a.m.

On Sunday, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan said Washington would not recognize the results and was considering additional sanctions, including an oil embargo. But he also expressed caution about such a step, which could have dire humanitarian consequences on the ground.

"We don't want to damage the country in a way that makes it difficult to repair after democracy is restored," Sullivan told reporters.

In a defiant rebuttal, Maduro responded at a televised news conference by saying the United States was "desperate given high participation levels" in the election. "Each vote is a response to the North, which thinks it owns us," he said.

Maduro had faced two main opponents — Henri Falcón, a former governor, and Javier Bertucci, an evangelical preacher. Ahead of the vote, some polls showed Maduro and Falcón, who broke with then-President Hugo Chávez in 2010, running almost neck and neck.

Critics say the government has committed fraud to win the last three elections and had predicted that the incumbent would ensure his victory. On Sunday, both Falcón and Bertucci denounced voting irregularities, arguing the government had doled out food and money in exchange for votes.

"We've received reports of voter intimidation, voters being asked who they're going to vote for and being offered money and food," Bertucci said. "This is not a democratic act . . . There can't be freedom if they buy out hungry people."

Opposition voters struggled with whether to honor the boycott. In eastern Caracas, Maria Diaz, a 30-year-old accountant whose infant child died in a public hospital last month due to a lack of medicines, said she voted for Falcón "because I don't think you win anything by abstaining."

"Look, the country's situation, especially food and medicine, is really bad," she said. "We need change."

Those boycotting the election spoke of colliding emotions — anger at the government, disappointment with

the divided opposition and frustration that exhausted Venezuelans were not taking to the streets.

"I am not going to vote. For what?" said Freddy Álvarez, a 43-year-old merchant arguing with his friend about the elections at a bakery in western Caracas.

As recently as last year, tens of thousands of Venezuelans joined anti-government protests, but those marches have largely died out.

"To see a change here, people need to take to the streets again," Álvarez said. "We will not overthrow Maduro with votes. I do not understand why people are so apathetic."

A salsa-loving former bus driver and union leader, Maduro, 55, has sought victory by offering food at rallies and railing against "el Imperio" — the Empire, as he often dubs the United States. On Sunday, pro-government vans with loudspeakers roamed the streets, evoking the name of Chávez and urging Maduro supporters to turn out.

"Let's vote! Let's defend President Chávez's legacy! Don't stay at home!" said a voice from one of the vans.

Some analysts, however, say that Maduro could have won without rigging the vote, in part because his government has created an uneven playing field. Many Venezuelans said they feared losing government jobs or benefits — particularly subsidized government food baskets known as CLAP boxes. Government officials set up registration booths for benefits next to — sometimes inside — polling stations.

"I already voted, and I'm now going to register for benefits, because that's what they're telling us to do," said Andrea Hernandez, a 19-year-old holding her 3-month-old daughter. "The bonuses, the CLAP boxes. If I don't vote for the government, they might stop giving me these benefits."

State TV showed Maduro walking alongside other government officials as he cast his vote.

"We are an example of democracy to the whole world," Maduro tweeted.

Dozens of countries have criticized the elections, saying they will not recognize the results. U.S. Vice President Pence called them "fake elections with fake results."

Last week, the United States added to the list of government officials under sanction, targeting the head of the ruling party, Diosdado Cabello, and his family members. U.S. officials have also been seeking to persuade regional banking centers, such as Panama, to crack down on the illicit cash of senior Venezuelan officials, including several charged by Washington with drug trafficking.

Yet a number of global autocrats, including Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin, have backed Maduro. The Russians have emerged as Maduro's main benefactors, and Moscow dispatched a 14-member mission to serve as observers of Sunday's vote.

Given expectations of a Maduro victory, analysts say the real question was always going to be what happens after Election Day.

By every statistical measure, this country is collapsing. Soldiers and police officers are deserting in droves. Water, electricity and transportation are breaking down, sparking a growing number of micro-protests across the nation.

More than 1 million Venezuelans — many of them starving and desperate for medical aid — have fled the country since 2015. Those numbers have spiked in recent months, with aid groups predicting a dramatic new surge after Sunday's vote, worsening staffing shortages at hospitals, schools and crude upgraders.

Plagued by a flight of expertise and a lack of maintenance and investment, oil production — the main source of hard currency in a nation with the globe's largest reserves — is crumbling. Output last month fell to 1.43 million barrels a day — less than Venezuela was producing in 1950.

Legal judgments against Venezuela filed by foreign creditors, meanwhile, have caused the government to panic, scrambling its oil tankers back into domestic waters out of fear that ships or cargo might be seized.

The question now is whether the pressure reaches the point where Maduro's inner circle cracks, a faction of the military turns against him or simply silencing all dissenters becomes mathematically impossible.

"I don't think any politician except Chávez in his best years would be able to rule this country for long, because it's simply ungovernable, collapsed in every sense," said Dimitris Pantoulas, a Caracas-based political consultant. "On May 21, Maduro will find himself hostage of a situation that he himself has bred. I don't think he'll last more than 12 months."

Given the relative weakness and the extent of corruption in the military, however, few here are reading a coup in the tea leaves. If Maduro leaves, experts say, it is more likely to be through a negotiated pact that offers him and his inner circle certain guarantees.

Others suggest Maduro could linger longer than many think. They point to Cuba's "special period" in the early 1990s, when food scarcities hit the nation following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Observers at the time wrote Fidel Castro's political epitaph, as it turns out, prematurely.

Venezuela's current crisis is relatively worse than those hard years in Cuba. And every time he has scented sedition, Maduro has moved quickly — arresting a growing number of senior figures and rank-and-file soldiers who seem remotely disloyal.

That Maduro continues to rule "is a very real possibility that has to be taken seriously," said Geoff Ramsey, a Venezuela expert at the Washington Office on Latin America, a think tank. "The Venezuelan government does see this as their special period, like Cuba in the 1990s, and they are

thinking they can get through a couple of tough years and then seek better relations both regionally and internationally."

The High Price Of Feminism In The 'New' Saudi Arabia

By Loveday Morris

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

It was just days before Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's March visit to the United States when Loujain al-Hathloul, one of Saudi Arabia's most high profile feminists, was stopped by security officers as she drove on a highway near her university in Abu Dhabi.

The 28-year-old was taken from her vehicle and spirited away to her home country on a plane.

Hathloul spent several days in prison before being released, and she was banned from using social media or leaving the country as the Saudi heir apparent embarked on his marathon three-week public relations blitz in the United States, where he met with President Trump as well as Oprah Winfrey and others.

The activist's rendition from the United Arab Emirates, where she was studying for a master's degree, highlights the contradiction between Saudi Arabia's public relations campaign touting reform and the reality on the ground for those asking for basic rights for women.

It also demonstrates the close cooperation between the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which together have promoted a model in the region that prioritizes stability and economic development while harshly suppressing political activism.

The details of Hathloul's forced return were recounted by people with knowledge of the incident, who were granted anonymity because they fear reprisals. Authorities in Riyadh did not respond to requests for comment on Sunday.

Despite apparently complying with Saudi Arabia's attempts to silence her — Hathloul's last tweet to her 316,000 followers was on March 12 — she was arrested again last week in what appeared to be a particularly brutal crackdown on female activists in the kingdom.

A total of seven Saudis were detained — five women and two men who had supported their cause, including a lawyer who had represented Hathloul in the past. They were accused of crimes including "suspicious contact with foreign parties" and undermining the "security and stability" of Saudi Arabia, and they have been publicly vilified in pro-government media in what activists have described as a vicious smear campaign.

"Loujain should be celebrated now," said Jamal Khashoggi, a prominent Saudi writer in self-imposed exile in the United States. "This is so unneeded right after the huge effort that MBS [Mohammed bin Salman] made in the United States, presenting himself as a reformer."

Hathloul's activism focused on women being allowed to drive and on ending the country's restrictive male guardianship system, which meant women required permission from a male relative to access many government services.

The movement had some success and had appeared to be in step with Mohammed's vision to modernize Saudi Arabia.

The kingdom granted women the right to drive last year and guardianship laws were eased. Women can now supposedly access government services and open businesses without a man's permission, though in practice it is still often requested, women say. A guardian's permission is still required for women to travel or marry.

But the kingdom's inching reforms have come alongside a clampdown on activists, with an increasingly oppressive environment for those who call for changes. Human Rights Watch described it as having sparked a "frenzy of fear" for those genuinely engaged in reform.

"This arrest campaign is an arrest campaign against feminism in Saudi," said one female activist who knows some of those detained. "Even the men who were arrested, they were with us."

At 2:30 p.m. on May 15, Hathloul's house was raided and she was arrested in her bedroom, according to Alqst, a Saudi human rights group based in London. She was taken to al-Hair prison, the group said, the same jail where she was held after she was seized in the United Arab Emirates. Those detained have since been transferred to Jiddah, according to human rights groups.

She's no stranger to detention. Hathloul rose to prominence in 2014, when she got in her car in neighboring Abu Dhabi and tried to drive across the border to Saudi Arabia. She was arrested and referred to a terrorism court but was released before being tried after 73 days in detention.

The following year she stood in local council elections, after a royal decree allowed women to both vote and run for office. However, her name was never added to the ballot.

She was detained again in June 2017 after returning from a family visit to the United States.

Her activism has brought her international recognition. Last year she was photographed alongside actress Meghan Markle, who married Britain's Prince Harry on Saturday, at a humanitarian summit in Canada. She was ranked 45th on a list of the most influential Arabs in the world by Arabian Business magazine last year.

But it has come at a cost. Saudi Arabia's Okaz newspaper reported on Sunday that those arrested could face up to 20 years in jail. They have been publicly branded traitors by pro-government media.

Those detained span several generations of Saudi feminists.

Aziza al-Youssef, a professor at King Saud University, has been campaigning for women's rights in Saudi Arabia for decades. When women signed a petition against the guardianship system, she took it to the royal palace.

Also detained was Aisha al-Mana, a 70-year-old who was among the first to challenge the driving ban, one of more than 40 women who drove in a convoy in Riyadh in 1990, along with -Madeha al-Ajrourh, a psychotherapist in her mid-60s, who is also now in detention.

"Loujain, Aziza and other activists who use their real identities are very brave," said the Saudi activist, who has campaigned online anonymously. "They have very supportive families and nice lives but they chose to be the voice for us."

Just hours after the announcement that the driving ban would be lifted in September, women who had campaigned for that right were called and asked to not comment publicly — even positively.

Speaking before the latest round of arrests, one female activist speculated that there could be an "old camp" trying to counter Mohammed's reforms. Others disputed that, saying he has a complete grip on power.

"There is no old guard," Khashoggi said. "He is in total control. What's happening is unprecedented." It doesn't represent the "old" Saudi Arabia, he said, but the "new Saudi."

Kareem Fahim in Istanbul contributed to this report.

Fall Of A Malaysian Dynasty Puts Target On Alleged 1MDB Mastermind

By Bradley Hope

Wall Street Journal, May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

NATIONAL NEWS

Trump Demands Inquiry Into Whether Justice Dept. 'Infiltrated Or Surveilled' His Campaign

By Julie Hirschfeld Davis

New York Times, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — President Trump on Sunday demanded that the Justice Department open an investigation into whether the department or the F.B.I. "infiltrated or surveilled" his campaign at the behest of the Obama administration, following through on his frequent threats to use his own government to target his political opponents.

Mr. Trump made the order on Twitter during a day of public venting about the special counsel investigation, which he charged had turned up no evidence of collusion with Russia and was now casting a worldwide net so that it could harm Republicans' chances in midterm congressional elections this fall.

But in ordering up a new inquiry, Mr. Trump went beyond his usual tactics of suggesting wrongdoing and political bias by those investigating him, and crossed over into applying overt presidential pressure on the Justice Department to do his bidding, an extraordinary realm where past presidents have rarely tread.

"I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveilled the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes," Mr. Trump tweeted on Sunday afternoon, "and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration!"

There was no immediate reaction from the Justice Department on Sunday. Rod J. Rosenstein, the deputy attorney general overseeing the Russia investigation, pushed back this month against Republican demands for more visibility into the inquiry by saying his department "is not going to be extorted."

The president's call came two weeks after he publicly expressed frustration with the Justice Department for failing to give Republican lawmakers documents they are seeking about the basis and findings of the special counsel investigation into whether the Trump campaign worked with the Russians to sway the 2016 election. The president said then that "at some point, I will have no choice but to use the powers granted to the Presidency and get involved!"

That day appeared to be Sunday, close to the first anniversary of the opening of the special counsel investigation, at a time when the president's frustration about it has reached a fever pitch and he and his allies have ratcheted up their efforts to undercut its credibility.

While most presidents who have faced investigations have responded with increased discretion to avoid being seen as trying to influence the outcome, Mr. Trump has dispensed with any notion that he is not trying to do so. He and his aides have called the investigation a witch hunt, called for an end to it, and tried to set the boundaries, and now the president has ordered a review of how it was handled.

Legal experts said such a presidential intervention had little precedent, and could force a clash between the sitting president and his Justice Department that is reminiscent of the one surrounding Richard M. Nixon during Watergate, when a string of top officials resigned rather than carry out Nixon's order to fire a special prosecutor investigating him.

"I can't think of a prior example of a sitting president ordering the Justice Department to conduct an investigation like this one," said Stephen I. Vladeck, a professor at the University of Texas School of Law. "That's little more than a transparent effort to undermine an ongoing investigation."

If Mr. Trump were to follow through with the demand, Mr. Vladeck added, "it seems to me that the recipients of such an order should resign — and that we're heading for another Saturday Night Massacre."

But a confrontation between Mr. Trump and his Justice Department over the order was not a certainty. It was not clear whether Christopher A. Wray, the F.B.I. director, or Mr. Rosenstein could refer the president's demand to the department's inspector general, who is already investigating surveillance of a Trump campaign aide, Carter Page. Such a step could defuse the current crisis and perhaps satisfy Mr. Trump.

Mr. Trump's directive prompted speculation that he might be trying to push Mr. Rosenstein out of his job without explicitly firing him, a move the president has frequently considered.

"This demand puts DAG Rod Rosenstein in a difficult position," Barb McQuade, a former United States attorney in Michigan, said in a post on Twitter. "He can't open an investigation based on a political demand, but if he refuses and is fired or resigns, he loses control of the Mueller investigation. Maybe just what Trump wants."

Among the material Mr. Trump and congressional Republicans are demanding are documents related to an F.B.I. informant who was sent to talk to at least two Trump campaign aides.

The president alleged on Friday that the informant had been a spy dispatched to infiltrate his campaign for political purposes. In fact, F.B.I. agents sent the informant to contact Mr. Trump's campaign advisers only after receiving evidence that the pair had suspicious contacts linked to Russia.

Mr. Trump began the day railing about the scope of the investigation by Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel. In a series of morning tweets that has become a weekend ritual for the president, Mr. Trump pointed to a New York Times report that detailed how Mr. Mueller is examining whether Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates offered help to the Trump campaign, and whether they coordinated with Russia in doing so.

"Things are really getting ridiculous," Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter. "The Failing and Crooked (but not as Crooked as Hillary Clinton) @nytimes has done a long & boring story indicating that the World's most expensive Witch Hunt has found nothing on Russia & me so now they are looking at the rest of the World!"

The president did not challenge the accuracy of The Times's account, which was the first indication that countries other than Russia may have offered assistance to his campaign in the months before the presidential election. But he suggested that the breadth of the inquiry was proof that Mr. Mueller's investigation was a partisan exercise geared toward harming Republican congressional candidates.

"Now that the Witch Hunt has given up on Russia and is looking at the rest of the World, they should easily be able to take it into the Mid-Term Elections where they can put some hurt on the Republican Party," Mr. Trump said. "Don't worry

about Dems FISA Abuse, missing Emails or Fraudulent Dossier!"

Mr. Trump was alluding to his contention that a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court warrant that was granted to look at Mr. Page, one of his campaign associates, was improperly obtained and based on false information provided by his political opponents, including a dossier that included salacious information about him.

Under pressure from Mr. Trump and his Republican allies in Congress, the Justice Department said in March that it would begin an investigation into the surveillance of Mr. Page. Law enforcement officials had long had concerns that Mr. Page, a former investment banker based in Moscow, was acting as a Russian agent.

But the president has continued to make the allegation that the court-ordered surveillance of Mr. Page was unjustified. Mr. Trump has also continued to claim that the special counsel should be looking not at his campaign, but instead at his 2016 rival, Hillary Clinton.

"At what point does this soon to be \$20,000,000 Witch Hunt, composed of 13 Angry and Heavily Conflicted Democrats and two people who have worked for Obama for 8 years, STOP!" Mr. Trump wrote in a pair of tweets. "They have found no Collusion with Russia, No Obstruction, but they aren't looking at the corruption in the Hillary Clinton Campaign where she deleted 33,000 Emails, got \$145,000,000 while Secretary of State, paid McCabes wife \$700,000 (and got off the FBI hook along with Terry M) and so much more."

It was not clear where Mr. Trump's estimate of the cost of Mr. Mueller's inquiry came from. The Justice Department reported at the end of last year that the special counsel's investigation had incurred at least \$6.7 million in expenses in its first four and a half months, and Mr. Trump's own budget allocated \$10 million for his office for 2019.

The president has often charged that Mr. Mueller is leading a team of Democratic activists who are out to get him, citing reports that some of his investigators are Democrats who supported Mrs. Clinton. He has also sought to discredit Andrew G. McCabe, the former deputy F.B.I. director, by noting that his wife ran as a Democrat for political office in Virginia with support and campaign donations from Terry McAuliffe, a close Clinton ally.

But Mr. Mueller himself is a Republican, as are several members of his staff, and the investigation is being overseen by Mr. Rosenstein, another Republican, who was Mr. Trump's own choice to be deputy attorney general.

That did not stop the president from suggesting that the investigation was politically driven and should end.

"Republicans and real Americans should start getting tough on this Scam," he tweeted on Sunday.

Trump Demands DOJ Look Into 'Political' Infiltration Of Campaign

By Ros Krasny, Billy House

Bloomberg News, May 20, 2018

President Donald Trump said he'll "demand" the Justice Department investigate possible infiltration of his campaign by the Obama administration, after earlier suggesting that a special counsel's investigation is attempting to hurt Republicans in this year's elections.

"I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveilled the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes – and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration!" Trump said Sunday on Twitter, referring to his predecessor, President Barack Obama.

Such a move would mark an escalation by Trump, who has relentlessly criticized Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation for months.

Trump's directive came hours after House Intelligence Chairman Devin Nunes, a key Congressional ally, said U.S. spy agencies crossed a "red line" if they planted a paid informant inside Trump's campaign. Sunday Tweetstorm

It also follows an early-morning tweetstorm in which Trump reacted angrily to a report that his campaign was offered help by two Middle Eastern countries in the run-up to the 2016 vote. In multiple tweets, the president derided a "soon to be \$20,000,000 Witch Hunt."

The president was responding to a New York Times report on Saturday that emissaries from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates met with members of Trump's team, including his eldest son, at Trump Tower in New York about three months before the election. They offered to help the billionaire developer win, according to the report.

The Times "has done a long & boring story indicating that the World's most expensive Witch Hunt has found nothing on Russia & me so now they are looking at the rest of the World!" Trump told his 52 million Twitter followers.

"Now that the Witch Hunt has given up on Russia and is looking at the rest of the World, they should easily be able to take it into the Mid-Term Elections where they can put some hurt on the Republican Party," he added in another tweet.

It's illegal for foreign governments or individuals to be involved in U.S. elections. But the Senate Intelligence Committee's top Democrat said the Times report suggests Trump's campaign had been "clearly receptive" to such offers.

"I don't understand what the president doesn't get about the law that says, if you have a foreign nation interfere in an American election, that is illegal," Senator Mark Warner of Virginia said on CNN's "State of the Union."

"If the 'Times' story is true, we now have at least a second and maybe a third nation that was trying to lean in to this campaign," Warner said.

In an interview Sunday on Fox News Channel, Nunes said he and Republican colleagues have yet to determine whether there was an informant because the Justice Department and FBI continue to withhold documents from them.

But the California lawmaker pointed to what he said were "leaks" behind news reports in recent days that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had used an "informant" to get information regarding the Trump campaign early in its counterintelligence investigation of possible ties to Russia. Happy Anniversary

This week marked the one-year anniversary of Mueller's appointment to lead a probe into election meddling by Russia. Republicans, led by Trump, are increasingly pressing the argument that the inquiry should be shut down because it was tainted by improper actions well before Mueller was named.

The president and his allies on Capitol Hill have been trying to undercut the probe by exposing the role of a confidential source who helped the FBI. Democrats, including Warner, as well as the Justice Department and intelligence leaders, have warned that identifying the source may put lives in danger.

Warner said Sunday that exposing the source would be illegal.

"If any individual, elected official or otherwise, knowingly reveals a classified piece of information about an FBI source, you are breaking the law and should be fully prosecuted," he said on CNN's "State of the Union." Warner said he'd "not seen any evidence" that the FBI planted an informant in Trump's campaign. 'Protect the Country'

Representative Adam Schiff, Nunes's Democrat counterpart on the House Intelligence panel, said he's "confident" the FBI has acted appropriately.

"Everything I have seen, it would have been negligent for the FBI not to take steps to protect the country in the midst of the information it was receiving," he said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

In a tweet later, Schiff said the president's "claim of an embedded 'spy' is nonsense. His 'demand' DOJ investigate something they know to be untrue is an abuse of power, and an effort to distract from his growing legal problems."

U.S. officials have pushed back against allegations that the Justice Department planted a spy in Trump's campaign, saying the FBI and CIA gathered intelligence from a number of people as they began their investigation of Russia's interference in the U.S. election.

The president earlier this week retweeted a comment by a Fox News anchor that "apparently the DOJ put a Spy in

the Trump campaign," adding, "Really bad stuff!" Internal Probe

Attorney General Jeff Sessions in March appointed John Huber, a U.S. attorney based in Utah, to conduct an internal probe into complaints of FBI bias and wrongdoing.

At the time, the appointment came when congressional Republicans were demanding that the Justice Department appoint a second special counsel to investigate whether the FBI mishandled the investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server and whether FBI agents were biased against Trump.

Sessions said in a letter to lawmakers that he would consider the recommendations Huber might make, including "whether any matters merit the appointment of a special counsel" later.

— With assistance by Elizabeth Dexheimer, and Chris Strohm

President Trump Says He'll Order Justice Dept. Investigation Of Informant In Russia Probe

By Chris Megerian

Los Angeles Times, May 20, 2018

President Trump tweeted Sunday that he will order an investigation into whether law enforcement "infiltrated or surveilled" his presidential campaign "for political purposes," escalating an already extraordinary clash between a president and his Justice Department.

The decision could lead to a new level of conflict over the Russia investigation, which began as a counterintelligence probe during the 2016 campaign and has continued as a criminal investigation led by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III.

Trump had previously warned that he may try to exert more influence at the Justice Department "because what's going on is a disgrace." He has harshly criticized Atty. Gen. Jeff Sessions for stepping aside from overseeing the Russia investigation.

Melania Trump is back at the White House after an extended hospitalization for a kidney procedure.

The White House said the first lady returned to the White House on Saturday morning. She had been at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center near Washington since having an embolization procedure Monday for an unspecified kidney condition that the White House said was benign.

President Trump visited his 48-year-old wife during several of the evenings that she was in the hospital.

The Trump administration announced sanctions Friday on a powerful Venezuelan official and his family on the eve of the troubled South American country's presidential election.

Diosdado Cabello, head of the ruling Socialist Party, and his wife and brother were blacklisted by the Treasury

Department. It accused them of illegally enriching themselves through drug trafficking, money-laundering and embezzlement of state funds.

Cabello or his representatives own 14 properties and three firms in New York and Florida that authorities can seize as part of the sanctions, the Treasury Department said.

The Mexican government has lodged a complaint with the U.S. State Department over President Trump's recent assertion that some immigrants living in the United States illegally are "animals."

A letter sent to the State Department on Thursday criticized Trump for disrespecting human rights, according to a statement from Mexico's Foreign Ministry.

The letter said that "the assertions of the U.S. president are absolutely unacceptable," according to the statement.

The Trump administration is ratcheting up sanctions on Iran following the president's withdrawal from the 2015 international accord that curbed Tehran's ability to develop nuclear weapons.

The Treasury Department on Thursday blacklisted two individuals and five companies in the Middle East, Africa and Europe that it said were financing the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group based in Lebanon.

The sanctions mean any assets that the persons or companies might have in the United States or in U.S. institutions will be frozen, and Americans cannot do business with the targets.

President Trump distanced himself Thursday from a controversial remark made by his national security advisor, John Bolton, that figured in North Korea's threat to cancel the summit meeting planned for June, and said preparations for the meeting were continuing.

Trump also implied that China's President Xi Jinping may be trying to influence the North Koreans to take a harder line with the U.S., perhaps in response to U.S. pressure on trade.

Bolton recently suggested that North Korea should follow the model of Libya, which over a decade ago abandoned its effort to build nuclear weapons. The example was sure to anger North Korean officials, who know that Libya's leader, Moammar Kadafi, lost his job and his life a few years after he gave up his nuclear program.

President Trump claimed again in a tweet on Thursday that his campaign was "spied on" by the FBI, drawing a comparison with the Watergate break-in.

The latest tweet builds on a claim Trump made previously, without evidence, that President Obama had ordered his phones tapped.

In this case, Trump is quoting a former federal prosecutor and columnist for the conservative magazine National Review, Andrew McCarthy, whose appearance on "Fox & Friends" on Thursday morning follows a lengthy New York Times report about the Russia investigation.

In an apparent swipe at President Trump, his fired secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, warned Wednesday that "going wobbly" on truth endangers American democracy.

Tillerson, a former Texas oil executive who Trump dismissed in March via Twitter, delivered the commencement address at the Virginia Military Institute.

"If we do not as Americans confront the crisis of ethics and integrity in our society among our leaders in both public and private sector, and regrettably at times in the nonprofit sector," Tillerson told the graduates, "then American democracy as we know it is entering its twilight years."

The Senate on Wednesday narrowly advanced a Democratic-led attempt to retain net neutrality regulations, the first step in a long shot bid to keep the online traffic rules on the federal books before their repeal takes effect in June.

President Trump Says He Will Demand Justice Department Probe Into FBI's Use Of Informant

By Deirdre Shesgreen

USA Today, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — President Trump on Sunday said he would "demand" a Justice Department investigation into whether the FBI "infiltrated" his 2016 presidential campaign.

"I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveilled the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes — and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration!" Trump said in a tweet Sunday.

The president's tweet — one of about a half-dozen angry social media posts he wrote on Sunday — was an apparent reference to reports in the New York Times and the Washington Post that a secret FBI source met with Trump campaign officials several times during the 2016 campaign. The informant was reportedly working for the FBI as part of its investigation into Russian interference with the American election.

Democrats said Trump's threatened investigation would amount to an abuse of power.

"He has finally crossed the red line and ordered up a DOJ investigation of his political opponents, as well as career law enforcement agents," tweeted Matthew Miller, a former Justice Department spokesman during the Obama administration

Both the Times and the Post reported last week the unnamed informant met with Carter Page, then a foreign policy adviser to the Trump campaign, and George Papadopoulos, an unpaid campaign adviser, to gather intelligence on possible contacts between the Trump operation and Russian officials.

The stories have infuriated Trump and his allies, who allege the informant was planted inside Trump's campaign by the FBI to spy "for political purposes."

"Reports are there was indeed at least one FBI representative implanted, for political purposes, into my campaign for president," Trump tweeted on Friday. "... If true — all time biggest political scandal!"

But the informant was not "implanted" in the campaign, according to the media reports.

Here's what the Times reported last week:

"F.B.I. agents sent an informant to talk to two campaign advisers only after they received evidence that the pair had suspicious contacts linked to Russia during the campaign. The informant, an American academic who teaches in Britain, made contact late that summer with one campaign adviser, George Papadopoulos, according to people familiar with the matter. He also met repeatedly in the ensuing months with the other aide, Carter Page, who was also under F.B.I. scrutiny for his ties to Russia," the story says.

Some of Trump's most ardent supports in Congress have demanded information from the Justice Department about the confidential informant. Justice Department officials have said revealing that information would endanger the agency's sources and methods — potentially risking lives.

On Sunday, Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said he had not seen any evidence to suggest an informant was placed inside the Trump campaign. And he said any move to reveal the identity of a secret FBI source would be illegal and should be prosecuted.

"The first thing you learn when you get involved with the intelligence community is that you need to protect sources and methods and that if you were to out or to burn such an agent, that person's life could be in jeopardy," Warner said on CBS' Face the Nation. "And I find it outrageous that the president's allies are in effect playing fast and loose with confidential information."

Trump To Ask Justice Department To Look Into Campaign Surveillance Claims

Reuters, May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Comey Friend Predicts Rosenstein, Wray Will Resign Before Complying With Trump's 'Infiltration' Investigation

By Daniel Chaitin

Washington Examiner, May 20, 2018

Benjamin Wittes, editor in chief of Lawfare and friend to ex-FBI Director James Comey, said Sunday he expects both

FBI Director Christopher Wray and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein to resign before they comply with President Trump's push for a Justice Department investigation into whether there was FBI "infiltration" into his 2016 campaign for political purposes.

"I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveilled the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes – and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration!" Trump tweeted.

Such an inquiry, Wittes wrote in reply, would be a "nakedly corrupt attempt ... to derail an investigation of himself at the expense of a human source to whose protection the FBI and DOJ are committed."

"So if the President really gives Rod Rosenstein or Chris Wray an order (as opposed to Twitter bluster) demanding a particular investigation not properly predicated under FBI/DOJ guidelines for this overtly political purpose, I believe both men will resign rather than comply," he added.

The president was seizing on reports of an FBI informant linked to his campaign after his allies in Congress and the conservative media rang the alarm about possible ploy to undermine his presidential campaign.

Capping a week's worth of speculation, two reports published Friday evening, one by the New York Times and the other by the Washington Post, described the informant in question as an American academic who teaches in the United Kingdom and met with up to three members of the Trump campaign to look into their ties to Russia. These include campaign advisers Carter Page, who was surveilled by the government via Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act warrants, and George Papadopoulos, who pleaded guilty last year to lying to the FBI and agreed to cooperate with special counsel Mueller's investigation. The FBI reportedly launched its investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election after it got word that Papadopoulos learned that the Russians obtained thousands of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's emails months before WikiLeaks published them.

Both the Times and the Post said they identified the informant, but declined to identify the person heeding concerns of national security officials that the individual's life and the lives of his or her sources would be placed in danger. However, subsequent reporting indicated the informant was a Cambridge University professor.

As congressional investigators, particularly House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes, have pressured a resistant DOJ to submit documents related to the genesis of Russia investigation, both Wray and Rosenstein have signaled that they don't plan to be bullied.

"The Department of Justice is not going to be extorted," Rosenstein said at a D.C. event earlier this month, when asked about his critics clamoring for articles of impeachment

against him. Rosenstein has come under fire rather than his boss, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, as Sessions recused himself from any election-related matters.

Wray, during congressional testimony last week, spoke of the importance of protecting confidential sources.

"The day that we can't protect human sources is the day the American people start becoming less safe," Wray told members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "Human sources in particular who put themselves at great risk to work with us and with our foreign partners have to be able to trust that we're going to protect their identities and in many cases their lives and the lives of their families."

Ultimately, Wittes predicted that Trump might back down from an official announcement Monday because he "is a wuss."

"He was going to fire Rosenstein, and he wussed out. He was going to fire Mueller and he wussed out. So I don't want to overstate this. There's lots of ways this could peter out," he said, adding, "But this tweet is no joke."

Wittes and Quinta Jurecic, the managing editor of Lawfare, wrote in a piece Saturday how they suspect but couldn't prove Trump and Nunes are attempting to "burn" an informant. Their piece quotes a conservative lawyer, "who at one point considered taking a job in the administration and still has close ties to it." This source said, "All this man [the source] wanted to do was to help our country. And this was a legitimate counterintelligence inquiry with more than an adequate foundation and a perfectly appropriate method. Trump and Nunes have defiled the oaths they took. It's just obscene." Nunes, for his part, denies that he is after an informant in his documents request related to the Russia probe.

Wittes' Lawfare has become a bastion of resistance, of sorts, for those in the intelligence community targeted by Trump and his allies.

Comey, during a talk with Wittes earlier this month, warned that Nunes, who is closely aligned with Trump, is demonstrating dangerous behavior with his campaign to obtain classified information.

Meanwhile, Lawfare has reportedly hired James Baker, a former adviser to Comey, who recently left the FBI. He is being looked at for possibly disclosing classified information with journalists about the so-called Trump dossier, though he has not been charged.

Trump To Demand DOJ Review Claims Of FBI Spy On Campaign

By Darlene Superville

Associated Press, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Sunday that he will "demand" this week that the Justice Department open an investigation into whether the FBI

infiltrated his presidential campaign for political purposes and whether any demands or requests for such action originated with the Obama administration.

Trump tweeted: "I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveilled the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes – and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration!"

The Justice Department declined to comment.

Trump has been promoting a theory circulating in conservative circles about a possible FBI spy on the campaign, though his attorney has cast doubt on it.

Rudy Giuliani, who represents Trump in the ongoing special counsel's investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election, said in a television interview last week that neither he nor Trump knows for certain if there was a spy on the campaign. Giuliani said they had been told of "some kind of infiltration."

In any event, the Justice Department's internal watchdog is already examining Republican complaints of FBI misconduct in the early stages of the Russia investigation.

Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced an investigation in March at the request of Attorney General Jeff Sessions and congressional Republicans. Sessions and the lawmakers had urged Horowitz to review whether FBI and Justice Department officials abused their surveillance powers by using information compiled by Christopher Steele, a former British spy, and paid for by Democrats as part of the basis to justify monitoring Carter Page, a former campaign adviser to Trump.

Horowitz said his office will look at those claims as well as communications between Steele and DOJ and FBI officials.

Trump did not elaborate on the promised "demand," which he included in one of a series of tweets he sent throughout the day Sunday. On Saturday, Trump tweeted, "If the FBI or DOJ was infiltrating a campaign for the benefit of another campaign, that is a really big deal." He said only the release or review of documents the House Intelligence Committee is seeking from the Justice Department "can give conclusive answers."

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Rep. Adam Schiff of California, the senior Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, called Trump's claim of an embedded spy "nonsense."

"His 'demand' DOJ investigate something they know to be untrue is an abuse of power, and an effort to distract from his growing legal problems," Schiff said on Twitter. "Never mind that DOJ has warned that lives and alliances are at risk. He doesn't care."

The GOP-led House Intelligence Committee closed its Russian meddling probe last month, saying it found no evidence of collusion or coordination between Trump's campaign and Russia, which special counsel Robert Mueller is looking into. Schiff and other committee Democrats were furious and argued that Republicans had not subpoenaed many witnesses they considered essential to the committee's work.

Trump last week accused the Justice Department of trying to frame him by planting a spy in his 2016 campaign. Trump quoted Fox Business anchor David Asman and tweeted Friday: "Apparently the DOJ put a Spy in the Trump Campaign. This has never been done before and by any means necessary, they are out to frame Donald Trump for crimes he didn't commit."

But when asked whether there was an informant on the campaign, Giuliani told CNN, "I don't know for sure, nor does the president, if there really was one," though he said they have long been told there was "some kind of infiltration."

Earlier this month, the National Review raised the question of a possible FBI spy in Trump's campaign. The article cites work by Republican Rep. Devin Nunes of California, an ardent Trump supporter and chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, who has demanded information on an FBI source in the Russia investigation. Opponents of Nunes' request have stressed the need to protect intelligence sources and methods.

The New York Times reported separately last week that at least one government informant met several times with Page and George Papadopoulos, another former foreign policy adviser on Trump's campaign. The Times reported, citing current and former FBI officials, that the informant talked to Page and Papadopoulos because they had suspicious contacts linked to Russia.

Papadopoulos was charged last year in Mueller's investigation and pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI. He has agreed to cooperate with prosecutors.

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Trump Demands Probe Into Whether FBI 'Infiltrated' Campaign For 'Political Purposes'

By Bradford Richardson

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

President Trump is demanding a probe into whether the FBI or Justice Department "infiltrated or surveilled the Trump campaign for Political Purposes," and whether the order came from the Obama administration.

The president called for the inquiry in a tweet on Sunday and said he will "do so officially" on Monday.

I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveilled the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes – and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration! — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) May 20, 2018

The demand comes days after media reports identified 73-year-old Cambridge professor Stefan Halper, who has ties to American and British intelligence, as the FBI informant who snooped on the Trump campaign over the summer.

In a series of tweets over the weekend, Mr. Trump railed against the arrangement and equated it to spying. He said it could wind up as the "all time biggest political scandal!"

Trump To Order Investigation Into FBI/DOJ Surveillance Of His Campaign

By Justin Caruso

Daily Caller, May 20, 2018

President Donald Trump tweeted Sunday that he is planning to order an investigation into the Department of Justice's surveillance of his campaign.

The president's tweet comes after numerous reports of a spy monitoring the Trump campaign in 2016, before the FBI opened an official investigation.

The Daily Caller's Chuck Ross reported that the reported description of the spy matches with Stefan Halper, a Cambridge professor and former CIA spy.

Rep. Devin Nunes said on Fox News Sunday that a spy in the Trump campaign would be an "absolute red line."

"There is no possible way, that we should be allowing, even if it was legal, we should never allow this in this country. Congress should not allow for anything like this to ever occur again to any political campaign, if it in fact happened," Nunes said.

Cambridge Professor Spied On Trump Campaign Advisers

By Chuck Ross

Daily Caller, May 19, 2018

A top-secret CIA and FBI source who spied on two Trump campaign advisers and initiated contact with a third was all but outed Friday night.

The New York Times and The Washington Post provided a detailed description of the source in articles published Friday night, but did not identify him by name, citing concerns about his physical safety.

But the reports match up exactly with a Cambridge University professor first described in a Daily Caller News Foundation report from March. That professor, Stefan Halper, contacted Trump advisers Carter Page, George Papadopoulos and Sam Clovis during the 2016 campaign.

President Donald Trump commented Friday on the existence of an informant, who he asserted was "implanted" on the campaign "for political purposes."

"Reports are there was indeed at least one FBI representative implanted, for political purposes, into my campaign for president," Trump tweeted on Friday. "It took place very early on, and long before the phony Russia Hoax became a 'hot' Fake News story. If true — all time biggest political scandal!"

Democrats, liberal pundits and some news outlets blasted Trump's statement, saying there was no evidence that the FBI planted a spy inside the campaign. He was also accused of coordinating with House Republicans to expose the identity of the source, who has long provided information to the FBI and CIA. The source has also provided information for the Russia investigation both before and after Special Counsel Robert Mueller's appointment on May 17, 2017.

But instead of a GOP-orchestrated exposure, it appears that Halper was essentially outed through leaks from the Justice Department or FBI.

The use of an informant is sure to raise questions on Capitol Hill as well as with Trump supporters. It remains unclear when Halper began conducting surveillance on the Trump team, whether he was paid, and whether he was directed by the FBI, CIA or both.

What exactly prompted the surveillance campaign is also a mystery. Page had been on the FBI's radar since 2013 when he cooperated with the FBI for its investigation of a Russian spy ring in New York City. One of the Russian operatives met with Page. Page shared some of his academic research with the operative, and said nothing of substance was exchanged.

Page and Papadopoulos joined the campaign together on March 21, 2016. Weeks later, top officials at the FBI and Justice Department considered whether to warn the Trump campaign about Page because of the Russian spy ring case as well as about Paul Manafort, the former Trump campaign chairman who is now indicted over his lobbying work for a Ukrainian political party.

Then-FBI Director James Comey and then-Attorney General Loretta Lynch decided against briefing the Trump team, according to a recent report from the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. U.S. officials did not want to offer the warnings for fear of alerting any Russian agents that were circling around the Trump associates, according to various reports.

The government appears instead to have opted for old-fashioned human-on-human spying.

Halper, a veteran of three Republican administrations, first made contact with Page in mid-July 2016 at a conference held at Cambridge. They stayed in regular contact for the next 14 months, Page told TheDCNF.

Page also made multiple visits to Halper's farm in Virginia. The pair also met in Washington, D.C. and maintained contact through email.

Page told TheDCNF that he did not believe at the time of their encounters that Halper was keeping tabs on him. But Page did say that during their first meeting at the Cambridge conference, Halper said that he had known then-campaign chairman Paul Manafort for years. And during an encounter later in the summer, Page and Halper discussed a letter that then-Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid had sent to the FBI accusing Page of being a Russian agent.

Page said he recalled that Halper rolled his eyes at the suggestion.

Contact between Halper and Page ended in September 2017, around the time a surveillance warrant that had been taken out against Page was set to expire.

Halper, 73, reached out to Clovis and Papadopoulos within days of each other in August and September 2016.

He reached out to Clovis first, offering to provide the campaign with foreign policy advice. Halper, who worked in the Nixon, Ford and Reagan White Houses, is a well regarded foreign policy expert. He and Clovis met for coffee on Aug. 31 or Sept. 1. That was their only meeting, although Halper sent Clovis a note congratulating him after Trump's election win.

As TheDCNF reported back in March, Halper contacted Papadopoulos through email on Sept. 2, 2016, offering to fly him to London to discuss writing a policy paper about energy issues in Turkey, Israel and Cyprus. Halper offered to pay \$3,000 for the paper.

Papadopoulos made the trip and had dinner multiple times with Halper and a Turkish woman described as his assistant. Sources familiar with Papadopoulos's version of their meetings said Halper randomly asked Papadopoulos whether he knew about Democratic National Committee emails that had been hacked and leaked by Russians.

Papadopoulos strongly denied the allegation, sources familiar with his version of the exchange have told TheDCNF. Halper grew agitated and pressed Papadopoulos on the topic. Papadopoulos believes that Halper was recording him during some of their interactions, sources said.

Halper's assistant, who is named Azra Turk, brought up Russians and emails over drinks with Papadopoulos. Turk also flirted heavily with Papadopoulos and attempted to meet him in Chicago, where he lives, a source told TheDCNF.

Turk recently shut down her phone. Halper has not responded to numerous requests for comment over the past two months. The FBI, Justice Department and CIA declined comment for this article.

Papadopoulos has pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his conversations with another professor who discussed Clinton emails. On April 26, 2016, a Maltese professor named Joseph Mifsud told Papadopoulos during a

meeting in London that he had learned that the Russian government had access to Clinton emails.

Two weeks later, on May 10, 2016, Papadopoulos met at a London wine room with Alexander Downer, the Australian High Commissioner to the U.K. An Australian diplomat named Erika Thompson introduced Papadopoulos to Downer. An Israeli diplomat named Christian Cantor introduced Papadopoulos to Thompson.

Downer reportedly told the FBI that Papadopoulos mentioned stolen Clinton emails during that meeting. That information was what the FBI claims sparked the opening of a counterintelligence investigation of the Trump campaign. That investigation, nicknamed "Crossfire Hurricane," started on July 31, 2016.

Halper is not a prominent public figure, but he is well known in foreign policy circles. Some information about his links to CIA and MI6 as well as the British intelligence service is available in the public domain. He is the son-in-law of Ray Cline, a legendary CIA officer who was the agency's top analyst during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Halper also served on former President George H.W. Bush's failed 1980 presidential campaign. He worked with a team of former CIA officers on an opposition research team. Halper would go to work on the Reagan campaign. There he was involved in a small scandal called Debategate, in which a small cadre of Reagan aides obtained debate notes from former President Jimmy Carter. Halper denied wrongdoing.

In recent years, Halper has worked closely with Sir Richard Dearlove, the former chief of MI6. They are both partners at the Cambridge Security Initiative, an intelligence consulting group that lists "UK and US government agencies" among its clients.

Halper and Dearlove were in the news in December 2016 when they threatened to resign from the Cambridge Intelligence Seminar over what they said were pervasive Russian ties.

President Trump Orders DOJ To Investigate FBI Infiltration Of 2016 Presidential Campaign

By Timothy Meads

Townhall, May 20, 2018

President Donald J. Trump announced via Twitter that he will officially order the Department of Justice to investigate whether or not President Obama's Department of Justice or the FBI infiltrated his 2016 presidential campaign for political purposes.

This announcement comes after the New York Times and Washington Post confirmed a story first reported by the Daily Caller News Foundation's Chuck Ross that a Cambridge professor had been used by the American government to gain access into Trump's presidential campaign.

From Chuck Ross:

"A top-secret CIA and FBI source who spied on two Trump campaign advisers and initiated contact with a third was all but outed Friday night.

The New York Times and The Washington Post provided a detailed description of the source in articles published Friday night, but did not identify him by name, citing concerns about his physical safety.

But the reports match up exactly with a Cambridge University professor first described in a Daily Caller News Foundation report from March. That professor, Stefan Halper, contacted Trump advisers Carter Page, George Papadopoulos and Sam Clovis during the 2016 campaign.

President Donald Trump commented Friday on the existence of an informant, who he asserted was "implanted" on the campaign "for political purposes."

"Reports are there was indeed at least one FBI representative implanted, for political purposes, into my campaign for president," Trump tweeted on Friday. "It took place very early on, and long before the phony Russia Hoax became a 'hot' Fake News story. If true — all time biggest political scandal!"

Democrats, liberal pundits and some news outlets blasted Trump's statement, saying there was no evidence that the FBI planted a spy inside the campaign. He was also accused of coordinating with House Republicans to expose the identity of the source, who has long provided information to the FBI and CIA. The source has also provided information for the Russia investigation both before and after Special Counsel Robert Mueller's appointment on May 17, 2017."

As Matt said on Friday, the question now is "what did Obama know, and when did he know it?"

From Matt:

"Katie wrote about it this morning. It's confirmed, folks. The FBI had a spy embedded with the Trump campaign. She added the bureau did not have enough evidence to launch a criminal investigation, so they executed a counterintelligence probe instead in July of 2016. The code name was "crossfire hurricane." This was the investigation signed off by FBI agent Peter Strzok. Strzok was a top counterintelligence agent before being transferred to human resources after his extramarital affair with bureau lawyer Lisa Page was made public and the two's texts, which numbered in the tens of thousands, were riddled with anti-Trump and pro-Hillary sentiments. Once then-FBI Director James Comey was fired by President Trump in May of 2017, Robert Mueller took over the investigation. Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein oversees him.

"... the FBI and CIA are supposed to act as independent agencies, not pawns for a coordinated political effort. It hasn't been the FBI's best moment. The bureau's reputation has been scarred due to the level of bias and potential tipping of the scales that occurred concerning both the Russia and

Clinton investigations. But these new revelations take it to a new level—and Obama remains under the radar, though all of this happened under his administration."

CRTV's Nick Short, and many other conservatives on Twitter, reiterated Matt's point after this announcement.

Trump Demands DOJ Probe Claims Of Campaign Surveillance

By Brett Samuels

The Hill, May 20, 2018

President Trump on Sunday said he'll ask the Department of Justice (DOJ) to investigate whether the FBI surveilled his campaign.

"I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveilled the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes — and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration!" Trump tweeted.

I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveilled the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes — and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) May 20, 2018

Trump has spent the last few days sounding the alarm on Twitter about claims that an FBI informant was embedded within his campaign. He has alleged, without evidence, that the FBI sought to spy on his campaign for political purposes, which Trump argued would be a scandal "bigger than Watergate."

The New York Times reported Friday that an FBI informant met with two former Trump campaign advisers, George Papadopoulos and Carter Page, after they'd received information that those two had contacts with Russia.

Trump's calls for an investigation into the matter come as House Republicans have pushed for access to documents that reveal the identity of the informant who gave investigators information about possible ties between the Trump campaign and Russia.

The DOJ denied a request earlier this month from House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) for details related to the source. The DOJ said that releasing such information would put lives at risk and endanger national security.

Despite those warnings, Trump has joined in the calls for the source to be revealed.

Democrats have also warned that doing so would jeopardize the source and national security, and could pose a legal risk. They have suggested claims the FBI spied on Trump's campaign are part of an effort to undermine special

counsel Robert Mueller's probe into Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Trump has long blasted Mueller's probe as a "witch hunt" and a "hoax."

Four former Trump associates have pleaded guilty or been indicted as part of the investigation thus far.

Trump Says He'll 'Demand' DOJ Investigation Into FBI 'Infiltration'

By Mark Moore

New York Post, May 20, 2018

President Trump said he will officially "demand" that the Department of Justice investigate whether the FBI "infiltrated" his 2016 presidential campaign during the Obama administration.

"I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveilled the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes – and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration!," Trump wrote on Twitter.

The posting comes after the president launched a stream of tweets on Sunday about an FBI informant who met with a number of Trump campaign associates in the summer of 2016 – meetings revealed in a report Friday by the New York Times.

Trump also continued to assail special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe as a "Witch Hunt."

Congressional Republicans are seeking records from the Department of Justice about the informant and other details about the investigation into Trump's campaign.

The president, his legal team and some GOP members of the House and Senate have pointed to the reports as evidence that Mueller's investigation into Russia meddling in the election and any collusion on the part of Trump's campaign aides was politically motivated.

The president in a tweet on Saturday hinted at that possibility.

"If the FBI or DOJ was infiltrating a campaign for the benefit of another campaign, that is a really big deal. Only the release or review of documents that the House Intelligence Committee (also, Senate Judiciary) is asking for can give the conclusive answers," he said.

FBI Director Christopher Wray has cautioned against outing informants, saying "the day we can't protect human sources is the day the American people start becoming less safe."

Trump To Demand Investigation Into Whether FBI Infiltrated His Campaign

By Rebecca Ballhaus

Wall Street Journal, May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Nunes: If Informant Reporting Is True, It Is A 'Absolute Red Line,' 'This Is Over'

By Pam Key

Breitbart, May 20, 2018

Sunday on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures," House Intelligence Committee chairman Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA) said if the reports of a potential FBI informant in the 2016 presidential campaign of President Donald Trump were true that is an "absolute red line."

Nunes said, "If any of that is true, if they ran a spy ring or informant ring and paying people within the Trump campaign — if any of that is true, that is an absolute red line."

He continued, "If they paid someone, it's an absolute red line, and this is over with. I don't know how to say this. There is no possible way that we should be allowing — even if it was legal, we should never allow this in this country. Congress should not allow for anything like this to ever occur again to any political campaign if it in fact happened. This is why I'll say again all they have to do is provide us documentation."

He added, "What I'm saying when I say it's over is this whole thing is a scam. There is real abuse here."

Devin Nunes Doesn't Rule Out Possibility Of Multiple FBI Informants In Trump Campaign

By Bradford Richardson

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

There could have been more than one FBI informant snooping on the Trump campaign, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes said on Sunday, but we do not know because the Justice Department has stonewalled congressional requests for documents outlining the impetus for the investigation.

Multiple reports have identified Stefan Halper, 73, a Cambridge professor with ties to American and British intelligence, as the FBI informant who snooped on the Trump campaign over the summer.

Mr. Nunes said he may not be the only one.

"We asked for specific documents that we have still not received from the Department of Justice," Mr. Nunes said on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures." "So they continue to leak out things about this informant, and we don't know if there's one informant or more informants because there's so much out there now. It's really getting tough to follow, and all we're asking for is give us the documentation that you used to start this investigation."

The New York Times reported on Friday that an "American academic who teaches in Britain" met with Trump

campaign advisers Carter Page and George Papadopoulos in the summer of 2016.

The informant was later identified in media reports as Mr. Halper.

In a series of tweets over the weekend, President Trump equated the arrangement to spying and said it could be the "all time biggest political scandal!"

If the reports are true, Mr. Nunes said it's a "red line" that the FBI cannot be allowed to cross again.

"If they paid someone, it's an absolute red line, and this is over with," he said. "I mean, there is no possible way that we should be allowing, even if it was legal, we should never allow this in this country. Congress should not allow for anything like this to ever occur again to any political campaign, if it in fact happened."

Mr. Nunes also questioned the timing of the media reports about the FBI's informant.

He said the Justice Department invited him and Rep. Trey Gowdy, South Carolina Republican, to a meeting on Friday, which the congressmen declined to attend after information from a previous meeting was leaked to the press.

"They were trying to get Mr. Gowdy and I to go on Friday to the Department of Justice for supposedly another briefing," Mr. Nunes said. "We said, 'Look, unless we're going to get documents'—we found out Thursday night they were not going to provide documents, so therefore we're not going to go. Now, if you look what happened on Friday night, probably the mother of all leaks of all time to two major newspapers that came out late Friday night. Now had Mr. Gowdy and I went to that meeting, you can bet they would have tried to pin that on us."

The FBI Informant Who Wasn't Spying

A secret source insinuated himself with Trump campaign officials. Ho hum.

Wall Street Journal, May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Mueller Plans To Wrap Up Obstruction Inquiry Into Trump By Sept. 1, Giuliani Says

By Michael S. Schmidt And Maggie Haberman

New York Times, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — The special counsel plans to finish by Sept. 1 its investigation into whether President Trump obstructed the Russia inquiry, according to the president's lawyer Rudolph W. Giuliani, who said on Sunday that waiting any longer would risk improperly influencing voters in the midterm elections in November.

The office of the special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, shared its timeline about two weeks ago amid negotiations over whether Mr. Trump will be questioned by investigators,

Mr. Giuliani said in an interview. A spokesman for the special counsel's office declined to comment.

Mr. Giuliani's comments were an apparent attempt to publicly pressure Mr. Mueller amid their interview negotiations. He urged that the investigation be wrapped up as soon as possible, pointing as a cautionary tale to the revelation by the former F.B.I. director James B. Comey in the last days of the 2016 presidential race that he was reopening the investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server. Mr. Comey's announcement is widely blamed by Democrats for costing her the election. The F.B.I. found no wrongdoing.

"You don't want another repeat of the 2016 election where you get contrary reports at the end and you don't know how it affected the election," Mr. Giuliani said.

Handing in a report to the Justice Department on his findings in the obstruction case would not signal the end of Mr. Mueller's work. The obstruction examination is one piece of Mr. Mueller's broader inquiry, a counterintelligence investigation into Russia's campaign to interfere in the 2016 presidential election. Counterintelligence investigations are used to gather information quietly about the activities of foreign powers and their agents — sometimes for years — and can result in criminal charges.

Mr. Giuliani sought to frame the outcome of the obstruction investigation as pitting the credibility of one man against another: Mr. Trump vs. Mr. Comey. The president asked Mr. Comey in the early days of the administration to end the investigation into his first national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn, according to contemporaneous memos and congressional testimony by Mr. Comey. The president's request is one of the main episodes Mr. Mueller is examining to determine whether Mr. Trump had criminal intent to obstruct the Russia investigation.

"We want the concentration of this to be on Comey versus the president's credibility, and I think we win that and people get that," Mr. Giuliani said, adding that he also hoped that the Justice Department would open a criminal investigation into Mr. Comey for perjury and for his role in the sharing of information cited in New York Times reports last year about his encounters with the president that prompted Mr. Mueller's appointment.

The president, Mr. Giuliani said, wants the report to be made public. His comments echoed tweets by Mr. Trump hours earlier, when he complained that a prolonged inquiry would hurt Republicans in the midterms.

Mr. Giuliani said that he and Mr. Mueller's office were still hammering out the terms of an interview with the president. He portrayed his client as a willing interview subject, saying that in the president's view, no evidence exists that his associates coordinated with Russia's election interference.

Mr. Giuliani said that an interview would be a distraction for the president and that the amount of preparation required meant that the president could not sit for questioning until after the scheduled summit meeting between Mr. Trump and the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, on June 12 in Singapore. Based on that schedule, Mr. Giuliani said, the president could be questioned around Independence Day.

Giuliani: Mueller Plans To Wrap Up Trump Obstruction Probe By Sept. 1

By Luis Sanchez
The Hill, May 20, 2018

President Trump's lawyer Rudy Giuliani said special counsel Robert Mueller intends to end his investigation into whether Trump obstructed the Russia investigation by Sept. 1, The New York Times reported.

Mueller shared his timeline for the investigation a couple of weeks ago during negotiations over whether the president would be willing to be interviewed by Mueller's team, Giuliani told the Times in an interview.

According to the Times, Giuliani's comments appeared to be a way for him to publicly pressure Mueller as the two sides negotiate a potential interview. Giuliani expressed concern over the probe influencing the outcome of the midterm elections.

Giuliani urged Mueller to wrap up the investigation quickly, noting how former FBI Director James Comey's decision to reopen an investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server close to Election Day was blamed by Democrats for influencing the election, according to the newspaper.

"You don't want another repeat of the 2016 election where you get contrary reports at the end and you don't know how it affected the election," Giuliani said.

As part of its investigation into whether Trump attempted to obstruct justice in the Russia investigation, Mueller's team is looking into Comey's reports that Trump asked him to end his investigation into then-national security adviser Michael Flynn.

"We want the concentration of this to be on Comey versus the president's credibility, and I think we win that and people get that," Giuliani told the Times.

He added that he wants the results of the investigation to be made public.

Ending the obstruction case would not mean the end of Mueller's overall investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Giuliani told the Times he is still discussing the terms of a possible interview with Trump, noting that the president was willing to be interviewed.

However, he said that an interview would be a distraction for the president and could not happen until after

the planned summit meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on June 12. He said Trump would likely be questioned around Independence Day, the Times reported.

Giuliani also wants an investigation into Comey for perjury and for his role in leaking information about his meetings with Trump that led to Mueller's appointment, the Times reported.

Giuliani: Mueller To Finish Trump Obstruction Probe By Sept. 1

By Mark Moore
New York Post, May 20, 2018

President Trump's lawyer Rudy Giuliani said special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe into obstruction of justice by the president will wrap up by Sept. 1 because allowing it to continue longer could improperly influence the mid-term elections in November, according to a report on Sunday.

Mueller's office released a timeline of its investigation to him two weeks ago while he was negotiating with prosecutors over whether Trump would testify, Giuliani told the New York Times.

The former mayor of New York City urged that investigation end soon offering as an example the firestorm former FBI Director James Comey ignited when he announced weeks before the 2016 election that he was reopening the probe into Hillary Clinton's email server.

Democrats and Clinton have blamed Comey's decision for costing her the election.

"You don't want another repeat of the 2016 election where you get contrary reports at the end and you don't know how it affected the election," Giuliani, a former federal prosecutor, told the newspaper.

The report said Mueller's findings on obstruction would not mean that the special counsel's work is completed.

He is also looking into Russia's efforts to interfere in the election.

Giuliani told the Times he wants the case to come down to a question of Comey's credibility as opposed to Trump's.

Soon after Trump entered the White House the president asked the former G-man to drop the investigation into his national security adviser Michael Flynn, according to memos from Comey.

"We want the concentration of this to be on Comey versus the president's credibility, and I think we win that and people get that," Giuliani said.

Giuliani Says Mueller Could End Probe Of Trump By September

By Dana Bash And Eli Watkins
CNN, May 20, 2018

Washington (CNN) Rudy Giuliani said Sunday that special counsel Robert Mueller is aiming to finish the probe into potential wrongdoing by President Donald Trump by September.

Giuliani, Trump's attorney, confirmed to CNN that Mueller's office shared its timeline with him about a month ago. The New York Times first reported on Mueller's time frame.

The former New York mayor said, however, that Mueller gave him the information within the context of a discussion about whether Trump would do an interview with the special counsel. Giuliani said the impression he got was that Mueller was saying if the President did do an interview, then the investigation into Trump's actions, including any potential obstruction of justice or possible collusion with Russia's interference in the 2016 election, could be wrapped up by that date.

Giuliani also said the date could be different now because his discussion with Mueller was a month ago.

A spokesman for the special counsel declined comment.

Giuliani warned in the Times' report that a lengthy investigation could affect the midterm elections this fall.

"You don't want another repeat of the 2016 election where you get contrary reports at the end and you don't know how it affected the election," Giuliani told the newspaper.

The Times reported that an end to one part of the investigation would not be an end to the special counsel's full investigation, which includes examining alleged Russian influence in the 2016 election.

Giuliani told CNN on Friday that Mueller agreed to narrow the scope of a potential interview with Trump as the special counsel investigation continued to seek a sit-down with the President.

In the same CNN interview, Giuliani said a president can obstruct justice, a comment that broke with the assertion last year of Trump's former attorney John Dowd that the President cannot obstruct justice.

Robert Mueller's Investigation Is So Serious, Let's Hope He Finishes Soon

USA Today, May 20, 2018

The chorus emanating from the White House says Robert Mueller has worn out his welcome: Following last week's one-year anniversary of his special-prosecutor appointment to oversee the Russian investigation, Mueller should just wrap things up already.

President Trump tied an angry bow around the sentiment last week, tweeting a sarcastic "congratulations" to America for entering the second year of a "disgusting, illegal and unwarranted Witch Hunt." And on Sunday, Trump

announced on Twitter that he would demand a probe into whether the FBI "infiltrated" his 2016 campaign.

His is the leading voice for a posse of political and media types who, for months, have conducted a smear campaign against Mueller, a Republican and former FBI director of impeccable credentials (chosen by a Republican and Trump-appointed deputy attorney general, Rod Rosenstein).

Just the same, eight out of 10 Republicans now say the Mueller investigation should end, so it's fair to ask, why hasn't it?

First of all, it's important to remember his mandate — it was hardly narrow. In addition to Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and any collusion between the Trump campaign effort and Moscow, Mueller must examine "any matters that arose or may arise directly from the investigation."

Anyone who hasn't been living in a cave the past 12 months knows that has become a target-rich environment, particularly with regard to whether Trump engaged in obstruction of justice through a number of actions, including the firing of FBI Director James Comey last year for his pursuit of the Russian probe.

A thicket of other issues has sprouted, including allegations or concerns that:

- ▶ Russian cash flowing into American politics.
- ▶ Trump son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner mixing personal business with foreign policy.
- ▶ Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort's financial irregularities.
- ▶ Trump personal lawyer Michael Cohen selling access to the Oval Office.
- ▶ Kushner and national security adviser Michael Flynn's questionable post-election dealings with Russia.

And Mueller's efforts have already borne fruit. Indictments have been returned on 19 people and three companies. Among five defendants who have pleaded guilty are three former Trump campaign or administration officials now cooperating with Mueller's investigation. A trial for Manafort is slated for July.

Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani says Mueller wants to wrap up his investigation of the obstruction issue by Sept. 1, and it would expedite matters if Trump agreed to an interview with the special counsel, something he should clearly do if there's nothing to hide and he wants this part of the investigation — which most directly threatens him — to end quickly.

Given the complexity and size of Mueller's task, it's unreasonable to expect him to finish in the short term. However, the clock is ticking.

Mueller's defenders will argue that independent or special prosecutors have taken years to finish their work (the Whitewater probe of President Clinton took nearly a year-and-a-half just to bring its first charges).

But this investigation, in so many ways, is far more serious and carries greater ramifications than almost all those previous efforts combined. Mueller is charged with resolving whether the president of the United States conspired with an adversarial government to, among other things, undermine a U.S. election. Beyond that considerable claim like almost unthinkable suspicions that America's chief executive is financially or otherwise compromised by his personal dealings with Moscow.

Those are terrible things to contemplate, much less believe, about a president who has been leading the nation for 15 months. Mueller has an obligation to shed light sooner rather than later.

End Robert Mueller's Investigation: Michael Mukasey

By Michael B. Mukasey

USA Today, May 20, 2018

It sounds harmless to suggest that the Mueller investigation be allowed more time to finish its work. But is it?

Let's review some history.

Recall that the investigation was begun to learn whether the Trump campaign had gotten help unlawfully from Russia. Justice Department regulations permit appointment of a special counsel only if (i) there is reason to think that a federal crime has been committed, and (ii) investigating it would present a conflict of interest for the Justice Department or there is another overriding public reason to take the investigation outside DOJ.

Because Attorney General Jeff Sessions had worked on the Trump campaign, he recused himself from the matter, and so the deputy — Rod Rosenstein — took the decision to appoint a special counsel. The regulations require that such an appointment recite the facts justifying the conclusion that a federal crime was committed, and specify the crime. However, the initial appointment of Robert Mueller did neither, referring instead to a national security investigation that a special counsel has no authority to pursue.

Although Rosenstein apparently tried to correct his mistake in a new appointment memo, he has thus far refused to disclose, even to a federal judge, a complete copy of it. In other investigations supposedly implicating a president — Watergate and Whitewater come to mind — we were told what the crime was and what facts justified the investigation. Not here.

Nor have any of the charges filed in the Mueller investigation disclosed the Trump campaign's criminal acceptance or solicitation of help from the Russians. The one indictment that relates to Russian criminality charges that the Russians hacked Democratic Party computers and committed other social media abuse, but says specifically that

if the Trump campaign got the benefit of it, that was "unwitting" — i.e., without criminal intent.

Since then, although the White House has produced documents in the tens of thousands, the investigation has gotten further from anything suggesting Trump campaign criminality involving Russian influence, not closer. Michael Cohen and Stormy Daniels, however fascinating, have nothing to do with Russian campaign influence.

What's the harm in letting it go on?

First, the law requires that a special counsel investigate a specified crime based on specified facts, not try to be the second coming of the Lone Ranger.

But further, the ongoing investigation saps the resources and attention of the Trump administration. If the administration cannot function, the burden of this constantly shifting investigation will give rise to a narrative that any failure was due to the Mueller diversion — that the Trump administration was stabbed in the back. That is potentially more damaging to our politics than any salaciousness that might be tossed up by Robert Mueller.

For both legal and political reasons, the end of this investigation is overdue.

Michael B. Mukasey, a former federal judge, was attorney general in the George W. Bush administration.

Giuliani Says He Has Rare Understanding Of Trump And Can 'Get The Best Out Of Him'

By Rowan Scarborough

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

Rudolph W. Giuliani says he can get the best out of Donald Trump as he vigorously defends him and lashes out at his enemies, allowing the president to focus on landmark achievements.

"I think the value that I bring to this is I understand him in a way that few other people do," Mr. Giuliani, the president's attorney and spokesman, said in an interview with The Washington Times.

"I also understand how to use him correctly," he said. "This is one of the smartest guys you're going to meet. And a lot of people underestimate that. They don't get the best out of him. I thought I did during the campaign. I did a lot of the debate preparation with [former New Jersey Gov. Chris] Christie. And the two of us together got the best out of him."

Mr. Giuliani and President Trump are reunited in a new campaign. This time, it's Mr. Trump versus special counsel Robert Mueller, his shop of mostly Democratic prosecutors, a rapacious liberal press and the other political party, some of whom want impeachment.

Mr. Trump's legal team went through a spring shake-up with the departures of career criminal defense lawyers John Dowd and Ty Cobb.

The president turned to an allied New Yorker who has been a federal prosecutor and a big-city mayor who is capable of quoting law and unleashing political assaults.

Mr. Giuliani sees himself as the perfect arrival, giving the president a trusted friend in a White House that undergoes constant turnover. Old campaign comrades have left; those who remain cannot talk Trump-Russia with the president since Mr. Mueller is interviewing everyone.

John McEntee, an aide constantly at Mr. Trump's side, was the latest to leave abruptly in March. Before that, Hope Hicks, his White House communications director and formerly Trump Organization executive, resigned after testifying before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

"The people around him, a lot of these people are gone," Mr. Giuliani said. "They knew what they were doing. And some of the people he knows, such as [Trump son-in-law] Jared [Kushner], really can't communicate with him. Or Don, his son, because they can't communicate about this. They can talk about public policy."

Mr. Giuliani's task? "To me, this is like public service. This will free him up even more to accomplish remarkable things with Korea, China, Iran, which I'm really very interested in."

Asked how he likes working for the real estate mogul turned anti-establishment, America-first president, Mr. Giuliani said, "I did it during the campaign and loved it. For many years, he's been my best friend or close to my best friend. I understand him."

Early on, Mr. Giuliani appeared as a fiery Trump defender on Fox News' "Hannity."

He showed that he will not be confined to arcane legal debates. He routinely criticizes Mr. Mueller's hiring of Democratic Party donors. He particularly goes after fired FBI Director James B. Comey, who he believes is the president's main threat.

Mr. Comey wrote contemporaneous memos on his meetings with Mr. Trump and leaked them to The New York Times with a confessed purpose of prompting a special prosecutor investigation. He wrote that Mr. Trump asked him to end an investigation into former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn. Mr. Trump denies this.

"He's not going to be worth anything as a witness," Mr. Giuliani said of Mr. Comey, who is on a book tour for his memoir, "A Higher Loyalty."

Mr. Giuliani knows the FBI from the inside. While U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York — read Manhattan — he launched all-out war against the mob and crooked Wall Street in the 1980s. The FBI provided the surveillance technicians and foot soldiers to penetrate and incriminate Mafia crime families.

In February 1985, he procured indictments against the leaders of New York City's five mob bosses.

"It was the most dramatic move yet in a state and federal war on the mob that, since August 1983, has resulted in indictments of more than 300 alleged New York Mafia members and associates," said The Washington Post.

Said Mr. Giuliani, the federal prosecutor: "This is a bad day, probably the worst ever, for the Mafia."

The indictments and follow-up convictions sent the Genovese, Gambino, Lucchese, Colombo and Bonanno organized crime families into permanent decline.

Today, Mr. Giuliani doesn't like what he sees at the Justice Department. He criticizes as ill-serving the president: Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who recused himself from the Russia investigation; Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who took the mantle and appointed Mr. Mueller; and FBI Director Christopher A. Wray.

He said he lets the president know how he feels.

"The president hasn't had much luck with Wray and Sessions and Rosenstein," he told The Times. "They seem to be intent on either investigating him or sitting by or rescuing themselves. And then when they get some real ethical and criminal behavior, they go hiding. I don't get it. I actually don't get it. I try to explain that to him."

Justice Department Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz is investigating the FBI's use of a partisan opposition research paper compiled by former British intelligence officer Christopher Steele. The Steele dossier was funded by the Democratic National Committee and the Hillary Clinton campaign.

Under Mr. Comey's leadership, the FBI made great use of Mr. Steele's discredited charges and obtained at least one wiretap on a Trump adviser based on the dossier. Agents also embraced the document as a guide to interviewing witnesses.

Mr. Comey told ABC News that he viewed Mr. Steele as credible.

"That means we should try and replicate that work to see if we can develop the same sources," the former FBI chief said.

On the dossier's use, Mr. Giuliani told The Times: "I think it's scandalous. Absolutely scandalous. It's not the FBI. It's Comey. I consider Comey to have pretty much proven to be the worst director of the FBI in history."

Trump Jr. And Other Aides Met With Gulf Emissary Offering Help To Win Election

By Mark Mazzetti, Ronen Bergman And David D. Kirkpatrick

New York Times, May 19, 2018

WASHINGTON — Three months before the 2016 election, a small group gathered at Trump Tower to meet with Donald Trump Jr., the president's eldest son. One was an Israeli specialist in social media manipulation. Another was

an emissary for two wealthy Arab princes. The third was a Republican donor with a controversial past in the Middle East as a private security contractor.

The meeting was convened primarily to offer help to the Trump team, and it forged relationships between the men and Trump insiders that would develop over the coming months — past the election and well into President Trump's first year in office, according to several people with knowledge of their encounters.

Erik Prince, the private security contractor and the former head of Blackwater, arranged the meeting, which took place on Aug. 3, 2016. The emissary, George Nader, told Donald Trump Jr. that the princes who led Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were eager to help his father win election as president. The social media specialist, Joel Zamel, extolled his company's ability to give an edge to a political campaign; by that time, the firm had already drawn up a multimillion-dollar proposal for a social media manipulation effort to help elect Mr. Trump.

The company, which employed several Israeli former intelligence officers, specialized in collecting information and shaping opinion through social media.

It is unclear whether such a proposal was executed, and the details of who commissioned it remain in dispute. But Donald Trump Jr. responded approvingly, according to a person with knowledge of the meeting, and after those initial offers of help, Mr. Nader was quickly embraced as a close ally by Trump campaign advisers — meeting frequently with Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law, and Michael T. Flynn, who became the president's first national security adviser. At the time, Mr. Nader was also promoting a secret plan to use private contractors to destabilize Iran, the regional nemesis of Saudi Arabia and the Emirates.

After Mr. Trump was elected, Mr. Nader paid Mr. Zamel a large sum of money, described by one associate as up to \$2 million. There are conflicting accounts of the reason for the payment, but among other things, a company linked to Mr. Zamel provided Mr. Nader with an elaborate presentation about the significance of social media campaigning to Mr. Trump's victory.

The meetings, which have not been reported previously, are the first indication that countries other than Russia may have offered assistance to the Trump campaign in the months before the presidential election. The interactions are a focus of the investigation by Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel, who was originally tasked with examining possible Trump campaign coordination with Russia in the election.

Mr. Nader is cooperating with the inquiry, and investigators have questioned numerous witnesses in Washington, New York, Atlanta, Tel Aviv and elsewhere about what foreign help may have been pledged or accepted, and about whether any such assistance was coordinated with

Russia, according to witnesses and others with knowledge of the interviews.

The interviews, some in recent weeks, are further evidence that special counsel's investigation remains in an intense phase even as Mr. Trump's lawyers are publicly calling for Mr. Mueller to bring it to a close.

It is illegal for foreign governments or individuals to be involved in American elections, and it is unclear what — if any — direct assistance Saudi Arabia and the Emirates may have provided. But two people familiar with the meetings said that Trump campaign officials did not appear bothered by the idea of cooperation with foreigners.

A lawyer for Donald Trump Jr., Alan Futerfas, said in a statement that "prior to the 2016 election, Donald Trump Jr. recalls a meeting with Erik Prince, George Nader and another individual who may be Joel Zamel. They pitched Mr. Trump Jr. on a social media platform or marketing strategy. He was not interested and that was the end of it."

The August 2016 meeting has echoes of another Trump Tower meeting two months earlier, also under scrutiny by the special counsel, when Donald Trump Jr. and other top campaign aides met with a Russian lawyer after being promised damaging information about Hillary Clinton. No evidence has emerged suggesting that the August meeting was set up with a similar premise.

The revelations about the meetings come in the midst of new scrutiny about ties between Mr. Trump's advisers and at least three wealthy Persian Gulf states. Besides his interest in Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, Mr. Mueller has also been asking witnesses about meetings between White House advisers and representatives of Qatar, Saudi Arabia's bitter rival.

A lawyer for Mr. Zamel denied that his client had carried out any campaign on Mr. Trump's behalf. "Neither Joel Zamel, nor any of his related entities, had any involvement whatsoever in the U.S. election campaign," said the lawyer, Marc L. Mukasey.

"The D.O.J. clarified from Day 1 that Joel and his companies have never been a target of the investigation. My client provided full cooperation to the government to assist with their investigation," he said.

Kathryn Ruemmler, a lawyer for Mr. Nader, said, "Mr. Nader has fully cooperated with the special counsel's investigation and will continue to do so." A senior official in Saudi Arabia said it had never employed Mr. Nader in any capacity or authorized him to speak for the crown prince.

Mr. Prince, through a spokesman, declined to comment. The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, the de facto ruler of the United Arab Emirates, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia, the king's main adviser, had long opposed many of the Obama

administration's policies toward the Middle East. They resented President Barack Obama's agreement with Iran over its nuclear program, his statements of support for the Arab Spring uprisings and his hands-off approach to the Syrian civil war.

News outlets linked to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates fiercely criticized Mrs. Clinton, Mr. Trump's Democratic opponent, when she was secretary of state, and diplomats familiar with their thinking say both princes hoped for a president who would take a stronger hand in the region against both Iran and groups like the Muslim Brotherhood.

Mr. Nader had worked for years as a close adviser to Crown Prince Mohammed of Abu Dhabi, and Mr. Zamel had worked for the Emirati royal court as a consultant as well. When Mr. Trump locked up the Republican presidential nomination in early 2016, Mr. Nader began making inquiries on behalf of the Emirati prince about possible ways to directly support Mr. Trump, according to three people with whom Mr. Nader discussed his efforts.

Mr. Nader also visited Moscow at least twice during the presidential campaign as a confidential emissary from Crown Prince Mohammed of Abu Dhabi, according to people familiar with his travels. After the election, he worked with the crown prince to arrange a meeting in the Seychelles between Mr. Prince and a financier close to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.

Companies connected to Mr. Zamel also have ties to Russia. One of his firms had previously worked for oligarchs linked to Mr. Putin, including Oleg V. Deripaska and Dmitry Rybolovlev, who hired the firm for online campaigns against their business rivals.

Mr. Deripaska, an aluminum magnate, was once in business with the former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort, who has pleaded not guilty in the special counsel investigation to charges of financial crimes and failing to disclose the lobbying work he did on behalf of a former president of Ukraine, an ally of Mr. Putin. Mr. Rybolovlev once purchased a Florida mansion from Mr. Trump.

Mr. Nader's visits to Russia and the work Mr. Zamel's companies did for the Russians have both been a subject of interest to the special counsel's investigators, according to people familiar with witness interviews.

Mr. Zamel and Mr. Nader were together at a Midtown Manhattan hotel at about 4 p.m. on the afternoon of Aug. 3 when Mr. Nader received a call from Mr. Prince summoning them to Trump Tower. When they arrived, Stephen Miller, a top campaign aide who is now a White House adviser, was in Donald Trump Jr.'s office as well, according to the people familiar with the meeting.

Mr. Prince is a longtime Republican donor and the brother of Betsy DeVos, the education secretary, and Mr. Prince and Mr. Nader had known each other since Mr. Nader had worked for Blackwater as a business agent in Iraq in the

years after the American invasion. Mr. Prince has longstanding ties to the Emirates, and has frequently done business with Crown Prince Mohammed.

Mr. Prince opened the meeting by telling Donald Trump Jr. that "we are working hard for your father," in reference to his family and other donors, according to a person familiar with the meeting. He then introduced Mr. Nader as an old friend with deep ties to Arab leaders.

Mr. Nader repeatedly referred to the Saudi and Emirati princes as "my friends," according to one person with knowledge of the conversation. To underscore the point, he would open his mobile phone to show off pictures of him posing with them, some of which The New York Times obtained.

Mr. Nader explained to Donald Trump Jr. that the two princes saw the elder Mr. Trump as a strong leader who would fill the power vacuum that they believed Mr. Obama had left in the Middle East, and Mr. Nader went on to say that he and his friends would be glad to support Mr. Trump as much as they could, according to the person with knowledge of the conversation.

Mr. Zamel, for his part, laid out the capabilities of his online media company, although it is unclear whether he referred to the proposals his company had already prepared. One person familiar with the meeting said that Mr. Nader invited Donald Trump Jr. to meet with a Saudi prince — an invitation the younger Mr. Trump declined. After about half an hour, everyone exchanged business cards.

"There was a brief meeting, nothing concrete was offered or pitched to anyone and nothing came of it," said Mr. Mukasey, the lawyer for Mr. Zamel.

By then, a company connected to Mr. Zamel had been working on a proposal for a covert multimillion-dollar online manipulation campaign to help elect Mr. Trump, according to three people involved and a fourth briefed on the effort. The plan involved using thousands of fake social media accounts to promote Mr. Trump's candidacy on platforms like Facebook.

There were concerns inside the company, Psy-Group, about the plan's legality, according to one person familiar with the effort. The company, whose motto is "shape reality," consulted an American law firm, and was told that it would be illegal if any non-Americans were involved in the effort.

Mr. Zamel, the founder of Psy-Group and one of its owners, has been questioned about the August 2016 meeting by investigators for the special counsel, and at least two F.B.I. agents working on the inquiry have traveled to Israel to interview employees of the company who worked on the proposal. According to one person, the special counsel's team has worked with the Israeli police to seize the computers of one of Mr. Zamel's companies, which is currently in liquidation.

In the hectic final weeks of the campaign and during the presidential transition, several of Mr. Trump's advisers drew Mr. Nader close. He met often with Mr. Kushner, Mr. Flynn and Stephen K. Bannon, who took over as campaign chairman after Mr. Manafort resigned amid revelations about his work in Ukraine.

In December 2016, Mr. Nader turned again to an internet company linked to Mr. Zamel — WhiteKnight, based in the Philippines — to purchase a presentation demonstrating the impact of social media campaigns on Mr. Trump's electoral victory. Asked about the purchase, a representative of WhiteKnight said: "WhiteKnight delivers premium research and high-end business development services for prestigious clients around the world. WhiteKnight does not talk about any of its clients."

After the inauguration, both Mr. Zamel and Mr. Nader visited the White House, meeting with Mr. Kushner and Mr. Bannon.

At that time, Mr. Nader was promoting a plan to use private contractors to carry out economic sabotage against Iran that, he hoped, might coerce it to permanently abandon its nuclear program. The plan included efforts to deter Western companies from investing in Iran, and operations to sow mistrust among Iranian officials. He advocated the project, which he estimated would cost about \$300 million, to American, Emirati and Saudi officials.

Last spring, Mr. Nader traveled to Riyadh for meetings with senior Saudi military and intelligence officials to pitch his Iran sabotage plan. He was convinced, according to several people familiar with his plan, that economic warfare was the key to the overthrow of the government in Tehran. One person briefed on Mr. Nader's activities said he tried to persuade Mr. Kushner to endorse the plan to Crown Prince Mohammed in person on a trip to Riyadh, although it was unclear whether the message was delivered.

Asked about Mr. Nader's plans to attack Iran, the senior Saudi official said Mr. Nader had a habit of pitching proposals that went nowhere.

Mr. Nader was also in discussions with Mr. Prince, the former head of Blackwater, about a plan to get the Saudis to pay \$2 billion to set up a private army to combat Iranian proxy forces in Yemen.

Since entering the White House, Mr. Trump has allied himself closely with Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. His first overseas trip was to Riyadh. He strongly backed Saudi and Emirati efforts to isolate their neighbor Qatar, another American ally, even over apparent disagreement from the State and Defense Departments.

This month, Mr. Trump also withdrew from an Obama administration nuclear deal with Iran that both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates had campaigned against for years, delivering them their biggest victory yet from his administration.

Trump Slams NY Times Report About Another Trump Jr. Meeting

By Mark Moore

New York Post, May 20, 2018

President Trump in a series of tweets on Sunday blasted a report in the "Failing and Crooked" New York Times on his son Donald Trump Jr. meeting three months before the election with an emissary from two Arab princes offering the campaign help and called for the special counsel's Russia probe to "STOP!"

"Things are really getting ridiculous. The Failing and Crooked (but not as Crooked as Hillary Clinton) @nytimes has done a long & boring story indicating that the World's most expensive Witch Hunt has found nothing on Russia & me so now they are looking at the rest of the World!" the president tweeted.

The newspaper reported on Saturday that Trump's oldest son met at the Trump Tower in August 2016 with George Nader, a Lebanese-American businessman, who said he was representing the crown princes of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and that they wanted to help his father win the election.

Joel Zamel, an Israeli political strategist, also attended the meeting and talked about how his company could benefit the campaign.

The sitdown was arranged by Erik Prince, a private military contractor and brother of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

A lawyer for Donald Jr. told the newspaper the meeting was about a marketing pitch that his client rejected.

Trump's son and campaign officials — including Jared Kushner and former campaign chairman Paul Manafort — met with a Kremlin-connected lawyer offering dirt on Hillary Clinton at the Trump Tower in June 2016.

In another Tweet, the president continued to lash out at special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian meddling in the election and any collusion on the part of Trump's campaign associates, calling it a "Witch Hunt."

"At what point does this soon to be \$20,000,000 Witch Hunt, composed of 13 Angry and Heavily Conflicted Democrats and two people who have worked for Obama for 8 years, STOP!" Trump wrote on his Twitter account.

"They have found no Collussion with Russia, No Obstruction, but they aren't looking at the corruption in the Hillary Clinton Campaign where she deleted 33,000 Emails, got \$145,000,000 while Secretary of State, paid McCabes wife \$700,000 (and got off the FBI hook along with Terry M) and so much more," he continued to rail on the social messaging site, misspelling collusion.

Republicans and real Americans should start getting tough on this Scam," he concluded.

Mueller, a Republican, was appointed to head the FBI by President George W. Bush in 2001, and was named as special counsel in May 2017 by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, a Trump appointee.

'World's Most Expensive Witch Hunt': Trump Lashes Out At NYT, Democrats

By David Nakamura

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

President Trump lashed out Sunday at "the World's most expensive Witch Hunt," trashing a new report in the New York Times that said an emissary representing the governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates offered help to Trump's 2016 campaign.

In a six-part morning tweetstorm, Trump accused the special counsel's investigation of Russian meddling in the 2016 election of turning to other leads around the world after, in his words, finding no collusion or obstruction of justice in its ongoing probe.

Things are really getting ridiculous. The Failing and Crooked (but not as Crooked as Hillary Clinton) @nytimes has done a long & boring story indicating that the World's most expensive Witch Hunt has found nothing on Russia & me so now they are looking at the rest of the World!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) May 20, 2018

The president was reacting to a lengthy story in the Times that said George Nader, purportedly representing the two Persian Gulf states, met with Donald Trump Jr., the president's eldest son, at Trump Tower in August 2016. The meeting was arranged by Erik Prince, the former head of Blackwater, a private security firm that has since changed its name.

The paper reported that Nader told Trump Jr. that Saudi and UAE princes were interested in helping his father win the election, and that an Israeli social media expert who also attended the meeting suggested ways to help manipulate public opinion. In the United States, it is illegal for campaigns to accept financial contributions from or coordinate with foreign governments in federal elections.

According to the newspaper, Trump Jr. reacted approvingly to the offer, though it is unclear whether any plan was put into action by the campaign. The Times reported that Nader is cooperating with the special counsel investigation, led by Robert S. Mueller III.

In his tweets, Trump asserted, without evidence, that investigations into his campaign's connections with Russia have cost taxpayers \$20 million and suggested that it is a politically motivated effort to undermine his presidency. The president said Democrats were in charge of the probe, even though Mueller, a Republican, was appointed head of the FBI by President George W. Bush, a Republican, in 2001.

....At what point does this soon to be \$20,000,000 Witch Hunt, composed of 13 Angry and Heavily Conflicted Democrats and two people who have worked for Obama for 8 years, STOP! They have found no Collusion with Russia, No Obstruction, but they aren't looking at the corruption...— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) May 20, 2018

As he has in the past, Trump attempted to direct attention and blame onto Democrats, including Hillary Clinton's campaign, raising old questions about emails she sent on a private server during her tenure as secretary of state in Barack Obama's administration.

Trump On N.Y. Times: 'Things Are Really Getting Ridiculous'

By Brent D. Griffiths

Politico, May 20, 2018

President Donald Trump on Sunday slammed a New York Times report that his son and other campaign aides sought to curry favor with other foreign countries along with Russia during the 2016 campaign.

"Things are really getting ridiculous," the president wrote on Twitter. "The Failing and Crooked (but not as Crooked as Hillary Clinton) @nytimes has done a long & boring story indicating that the World's most expensive Witch Hunt has found nothing on Russia & me so now they are looking at the rest of the World!"

Trump appeared to be responding to a Times report from Saturday night that says Donald Trump Jr. and former Blackwater head Erik Prince attended a meeting in Trump Tower in August 2016 with an Israeli social media specialist and a representative of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

According to the Times, the meeting was seen as an opportunity for the two countries to build ties to Trump and his team. The social media specialist also pitched a plan on how to manipulate those platforms to Trump's benefit.

The information in the report could also call into question Prince's testimony to the House Intelligence Committee last November, when he testified that he played a very limited role in the Trump campaign.

On Sunday, the president sought to use the fact that the report focuses largely on ties outside of Russia as evidence that his critics have found "no collusion" and "no obstruction." This past week marked the one-year anniversary of special counsel Robert Mueller taking the reins of the Russia probe, which has led to five guilty pleas and 17 indictments, including charges against Russian nationals and companies for participating in what has been called "information warfare" to sway the 2016 race.

"Now that the Witch Hunt has given up on Russia and is looking at the rest of the World, they should easily be able to take it into the Mid-Term Elections where they can put some

hurt on the Republican Party," the president added. "Don't worry about Dems FISA Abuse, missing Emails or Fraudulent Dossier!"

POLITICO reported Thursday that Trump's newest attorney, former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani, has begun planning for prep sessions with the president if the commander in chief agrees to sit down with Mueller.

Intelligence Committee Democrats: Trump Jr.'s Reported Meeting With Arab Representative Could Be Crime

By Deirdre Shesgreen

USA Today, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — The top Democrats on the Senate and House intelligence committees said Sunday Trump campaign officials may have committed a crime if a new report proves true: that three months before the 2016 election, President Trump's son met an emissary for two Arab princes and an Israeli political operative who offered to help his father win the presidential election.

On Saturday, the New York Times reported that Donald Trump Jr. met on Aug. 3, 2016 with a representative for two wealthy princes, from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, along with Joel Zamel, an Israeli expert in "social media manipulation."

The men reportedly told Trump Jr. that they wanted to support the Trump campaign. Zamel even said his firm "had already drawn up a multimillion-dollar proposal for a social media manipulation effort to help elect Mr. Trump," according to the New York Times story.

"If these facts are accurate, it demonstrates yet again just how not only willing but eager the president's son and the Trump campaign were to solicit, to receive foreign help" during the election, Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif, said on NBC's Meet the Press. Schiff is the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee.

"Receiving, soliciting, using foreign assistance is a crime," Schiff said. "You're not allowed to get the help of a foreign government, friendly or unfriendly," in American elections.

Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said if the New York Times story is true, it's yet another indication that a foreign nation was trying to interfere in the 2016 presidential election.

"I don't understand what the president doesn't get about the law that says if you have a foreign nation interfere in an American election, that's illegal," Warner said Sunday on CNN's State of the Nation.

Warner said that Trump Jr.'s reported meeting with the three Middle Eastern officials is similar to his sit-down with Russian agents to discuss what he thought would be incriminating information on Hillary Clinton in June 2016.

Trump Jr. took that meeting with Russian attorney Natalia Veselnitskaya and Rinat Akhmetshin, a Russian lobbyist, among others, because he thought they had damaging information about Clinton.

Both meetings are reportedly being investigated by Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller, who was appointed to probe Russian meddling in the 2016 campaign and possible collusion between the Kremlin and the Trump campaign.

The New York Times story and Mueller's investigation was clearly on the president's mind on Sunday morning as well. In a series of tweets, Trump blasted the probe as an "expensive Witch Hunt" that has not turned up any evidence against him.

"Things are really getting ridiculous," Trump said in one tweet. "The Failing and Crooked (but not as Crooked as Hillary Clinton) @nytimes has done a long & boring story indicating that the World's most expensive Witch Hunt has found nothing on Russia & me so now they are looking at the rest of the World!"

"....At what point does this soon to be \$20,000,000 Witch Hunt, composed of 13 Angry and Heavily Conflicted Democrats and two people who have worked for Obama for 8 years, STOP!" Trump wrote in a second missive. "They have found no Collussion with Russia, No Obstruction, but they aren't looking at the corruption..." in the Clinton campaign.

CNN's Jake Tapper Presses Democrat For Evidence Trump Campaign Colluded With Russia

By Bradford Richardson

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

CNN's Jake Tapper pressed Sen. Mark Warner for evidence that the Trump campaign accepted help from a foreign adversary to win the 2016 presidential race.

Mr. Warner, vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, cited a report released by the committee last week that found Russia "massively interfered in our elections," not only "to sow disarray, but to help Trump and to hurt Clinton."

But Mr. Tapper said the big question is still whether Russia did so "with the assistance or participation of any American, especially and including people who are in the Trump campaign's orbit."

"That is clearly the endpoint question that we're going to have to deal with," the Virginia Democrat responded.

"But have you seen any evidence of that?" Mr. Tapper shot back.

Mr. Warner pointed to the Trump Tower meeting between Donald Trump Jr. and a Russian lawyer who was offering dirt on Hillary Clinton. He said the meeting shows the Trump campaign was "receptive to these kinds of offers" and may be indicative of a "pattern."

"Now, did the president know about that meeting or not? I don't know," Mr. Warner said. "I'd like to get the answer to that."

"Still, as far as the public knows," Mr. Tapper said, "no evidence of anybody in the Trump team accepting the offers of help, no evidence of actual conspiracy that we know of yet, that we in the public know of yet. And you're not willing to comment on whether or not you've seen evidence of that conspiracy."

Alan Dershowitz: Mueller Probe, FBI Full Of 'Republicans Who Hated Trump'

By Justin Caruso

Daily Caller, May 20, 2018

Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz said that Robert Mueller's legal team and the FBI are full of "long-term Republicans who hated Trump" on ABC's "This Week" Sunday.

Mediaite founder Dan Abrams said, "Alan's been consistent on the issue about the law over the years. And I respect that. But the notion that the special counsel can't view this objectively, that Robert Mueller is somehow, what, Robert Mueller is so compromised? Which way? A long-time Republican? Why can't Robert Mueller be the one to assess whether there are any crimes here?"

"First of all, this long-term Republican—Comey was a long-term Republican. They're all long-term Republicans who hated Trump," Dershowitz said. (RELATED: 'If This Had Been Hillary Clinton's Lawyer...' — Alan Dershowitz Brings The Truth On CNN)

Abrams shot back, "You know that Mueller hated Trump?"

"You won't have any doubt about that at the end," Dershowitz said. (RELATED: WATCH: Tucker And Alan Dershowitz Ruin James Comey's Night)

Alan Dershowitz: Word Of An FBI Informant In The Trump Campaign Merits Investigation

By Naomi Lim

Washington Examiner, May 20, 2018

Famed lawyer Alan Dershowitz said Sunday reports the FBI had a source giving them information about the Trump campaign is grounds for a investigation.

"Now we have information of an FBI informant in the campaign. That's worth investigation," Dershowitz said during a panel on ABC's "This Week."

"That's good enough to get an investigation going," he continued when told the supposed FBI informant was not a member of Trump's campaign, but that they spoke with up to three campaign aides ahead of the 2016 election.

Two reports published Friday evening, one by the New York Times and the other by the Washington Post, described

an FBI source, an American academic teaching in the United Kingdom, who met with up to three members of the Trump campaign ahead of the 2016 election.

The identity of the FBI informant was leaked to at least two media outlets, but the newsrooms refrained from publishing the individual's name out of concern for national security and the safety of the person and his or her sources. Subsequent reporting has inferred the informant was a Cambridge University professor, who was not embedded in the campaign but sought out meetings with campaign advisers Carter Page and George Papadopoulos, and with Trump campaign co-chair Sam Clovis.

The reports follow Republican furor this week about a possible effort to spy on Trump's 2016 campaign.

Dershowitz, a critic of special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe, also condemned political pundits who argue Mueller and former FBI Director James Comey are not biased against President Trump because they had been members of the Republican Party.

"This 'long-time Republican.' Comey was a long-time Republican. They're all long-time Republicans who is hated Trump," he added.

Michael Cohen Payments Put Spotlight On New York Investment Firm Linked To Russian Billionaire

By Rosalind S. Helderman, Michael Kranish And Steven Mufson

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

In June 2017, Michael Cohen, President Trump's longtime personal attorney, had an invitation for one of his other clients: Would he like to attend a fundraiser for Trump's reelection?

Andrew Intrater — the chief executive of Columbus Nova, a New York-based investment management firm linked to a Russian billionaire — paid the \$35,000 donation to attend the event, which also benefited the Republican National Committee.

The contribution was one of several ways that Columbus Nova and people associated with it lent support for Trump and his allies last year. It underscores how Cohen, who was seeking to raise money for the RNC as a deputy finance chairman, sought to use his new standing after Trump's election to bolster both his finances and political clout.

Intrater also made a \$250,000 donation to Trump's inaugural committee, a contribution that gave him prime access to the January 2017 festivities. He brought with him as a guest his cousin, Russian billionaire Viktor Vekselberg, whose conglomerate Renova Group is the biggest client of Columbus Nova.

And Columbus Nova paid Cohen \$500,000 in the first half of 2017 to bring in new investors. It was among the corporations that paid Cohen at least \$2.95 million in consulting fees after Trump took office.

Both Columbus Nova officials and a spokesman for Vekselberg have said that Vekselberg played no role in the hiring of Cohen.

But the Trump lawyer's connection to Columbus Nova has put new scrutiny on the Russian investor, who made billions in the post-Soviet area in oil and gas industry. Vekselberg and Renova Group were sanctioned in April by the Treasury Department — an inclusion that surprised both his colleagues and some U.S. Russia experts, who said that he is not viewed as close to Russian President Vladimir Putin as others on the list.

Meanwhile, federal officials working with special counsel Robert S. Mueller III questioned Vekselberg when his plane landed at a New York-area airport earlier this year and have also interviewed Intrater, the New York Times has reported.

The exact nature of Mueller's interest in Vekselberg is unclear. As part of his investigation into Russia's interference in the 2016 campaign, the special counsel has been examining whether foreign money flowed into U.S. political campaigns, according to people familiar with the probe.

A spokesman for Vekselberg did not respond to requests for comment about the special counsel investigation. Columbus Nova officials declined to comment on the report that Intrater has spoken with Mueller's team.

Intrater declined to comment. A lawyer for Cohen did not respond to a request for comment.

Intrater and Cohen met by happenstance, according to a person familiar with their relationship. Intrater was having dinner at a Manhattan restaurant in the fall of 2016 with some friends when one of them pointed out that Cohen was also dining there. The friend introduced Cohen to Intrater, and the two stayed in touch.

After the election, Intrater, a Trump supporter, donated \$250,000 to the inaugural committee so he could participate in the festivities in Washington, according to a person familiar with his decision.

Intrater gave Vekselberg an extra ticket. At one point during their time in Washington, the two cousins encountered Cohen, the person said.

Around the same time, Intrater signed Cohen to a \$1 million annual contract to help find investors for Columbus Nova.

"Andy was impressed with the large number of wealthy people Cohen seemed to know," said the person familiar with Intrater's decision who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal matters. "Michael Cohen indicated he could recruit investors for him."

In late June 2017, Intrater — who had previously donated only \$4,000 to federal candidates, according to campaign finance records — contributed \$35,000 to Trump Victory, a joint fundraising committee for Trump's reelection and the RNC.

But not long after, the business relationship between Intrater and Cohen ended.

Cohen had failed to identify any new investors for Columbus Nova. The company and Cohen agreed to terminate the contract and Cohen was paid only half of the \$1 million their agreement had originally called for, according to a person familiar with the arrangement.

Columbus Nova was launched as an investment management firm in 2000 by Intrater, with a commitment from Vekselberg to invest in its projects on a case-by-case basis, officials said.

The firm has declined to say how much of Vekselberg's money it invests but confirmed that his conglomerate is its largest client. Among his investments was the media company Gawker, in which an investment fund managed by Columbus Nova invested \$15 million in January 2016 on Vekselberg's behalf, according to people familiar with the transaction.

Ilya Zaslavskiy, a former Russian energy consultant who now runs Underminers.info, a project studying post-Soviet oligarchs, said such investments, as well as philanthropic donations, are used by wealthy Russians to promote the Kremlin's interests abroad.

"It's about reputation for himself and his family and trying to establish the good life for his family here. And also about advancing the Kremlin's goal of soft power," said Zaslavskiy, who worked in the Russian energy industry until 2010, including for a period of time for a company controlled by Vekselberg.

The notion was rejected by a close colleague of Vekselberg's, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe his thinking.

"He has global interests," the colleague said. "He does not do this to become part of high society. Someone worth \$14 billion is part of global society already."

Over the years, Columbus Nova has been described as closely associated with Vekselberg. A 2018 SEC filing by a company whose directors included a Columbus Nova partner described the firm as "the U.S.-based investment and operating arm of Mr. Vekselberg's Renova Group of companies."

The website of Vekselberg's company, Renova Group, listed Columbus Nova as one of its companies in 2017, according to pages that have since been archived. The website was recently pulled down, replaced by a message that it was under construction.

However, Columbus Nova has said it is owned by Americans and has never been controlled by the Renova Group or Vekselberg.

Interviews with people who have worked with Columbus Nova have said they perceived the firm's relationship with Vekselberg to be a close one, regardless of the company's ownership structure.

"It was obvious that when you entered Columbus Nova's office you were entering Viktor Vekselberg's New York office," said an American businessman who visited the firm several times six or seven years ago and spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe private interactions.

"The conversations there were primarily about placing Vekselberg's money, though they were also seeking other money for investment," he added.

Vekselberg started building his corporate empire in the Yeltsin years, after the fall of the Soviet Union. He founded Renova Asset Management Co. in 1990 and made money selling used copper cables and in the aluminum business.

He had huge success with his investments in the oil and gas industry. Vekselberg and a handful of Russian partners — Alfa, Access and Renova — initially bought 40 percent of a state-owned oil firm for just \$810 million during the post-Soviet privatization wave. Later, after they had acquired the entire company, BP paid them \$7.8 billion for half the enterprise.

The company then became TNK-BP, a lucrative joint venture that threw off massive dividends. Renova's share came to \$4.5 billion by 2008 — equal to \$75 million a month at that time. After the marriage of the Russian partners and BP turned rancorous, Rosneft paid \$55 billion to acquire all of TNK-BP in 2013; Renova's share amounted to roughly \$7 billion.

Among Vekselberg's main assets now are two Swiss-based firms: Sulzer, a maker of pumps, and Oerlikon, a maker of high-tech products and components.

In April, Vekselberg was one of seven Russian business executives who was sanctioned by the U.S. government after the poisoning of a former Russian spy in the U.K. that Western intelligence officials have blamed on Russia.

"Russian oligarchs and elites who profit from this corrupt system will no longer be insulated from the consequences of their government's destabilizing activities," the Treasury Department said in a statement at the time.

The move surprised Vekselberg.

"He is not part of Putin's inner circle. That's why when he was sanctioned he was shocked," said Vekselberg's colleague, who has spoken to him recently.

Some Russia experts in the United States were also taken aback by Vekselberg's inclusion on the list, noting that he has demonstrated an interest in building ties between the United States and Russia.

"I was shocked when I saw his name there," said Michael McFaul, who served as U.S. ambassador to Moscow under President Barack Obama. "I think generally sanctions are the right thing to do. But I know lots of people who work with him. He would not make my top 10, top 20 or top 30."

The Treasury Department declined to comment.

Associates of Vekselberg's in Russia said he is probably displeased by the new wave of attention triggered by the news about Columbus Nova's relationship with Cohen.

"Vekselberg is not very public; he does not like to be on TV, or give interviews, or speeches at events," said Sergey Aleksashenko, a former deputy finance minister and former deputy chairman of Russia's Central Bank. "Like all Russian oligarchs, he needs to keep good relations with Putin and the government. He's not crazy — he is very cautious."

Alice Crites and Tom Hamburger in Washington and Amie Ferris-Rotman in Moscow contributed to this report.

Investigators Finally Get Look At Materials From Cohen Raid

By Larry Neumeister

Associated Press, May 20, 2018

NEW YORK (AP) — Criminal investigators are getting their first look at materials gathered from raids on the home and office of President Donald Trump's personal lawyer as a process to separate items subject to attorney-client privilege appears to be meeting a judge's demand that it occur speedily and efficiently.

The progress comes just days before U.S. District Judge Kimba M. Wood will preside over a fourth hearing resulting from Michael Cohen's efforts to gain influence over what potential evidence seized in the April 9 raids can be deemed subject to the privilege and blocked from the view of criminal prosecutors. Prosecutors say they are investigating possible fraud as they study Cohen's personal business dealings.

Wood last month designated a former federal judge, Barbara Jones, to serve as a neutral party — known as a special master — and resolve disputes over what items can be kept secret and out of the view of investigators.

Twice, Jones has filed letters updating the status of the privilege search, most recently a week ago. She said she will provide Wood with a timeline for concluding the privilege review once she has received enough of Cohen's electronic property.

In a letter to the court on Friday, Cohen's lawyers indicated they were encouraged by the system that was set up, noting the "careful review procedure that is currently being overseen by the special master." The letter was filed as they sought to exclude Michael Avenatti, an attorney for porn star Stormy Daniels, from joining the court case.

The first materials to face the scrutiny of Jones and lawyers for Cohen, Trump and the Trump Organization, were likely the easiest to study: eight boxes of paper documents.

The majority of what was seized, though, was contained on over a dozen electronic devices, including computers, cellular phones and an iPad. The paper documents, numbering in the hundreds or thousands, were processed over a two-week period, enabling criminal prosecutors in recent days to begin scrutinizing raid materials for the first time.

But it is likely that the electronic documents, containing a much larger volume of materials, will take longer to process.

Jones said in a letter to the court a week ago that the government was expected to produce all of the content from the raids except for the electronic contents of a single computer by Friday. Then, lawyers for Cohen and Trump will designate items they think are subject to attorney-client privilege as the same time Jones is making her own designations.

At hearings last month, Wood said she wanted the process to move much faster than the more than a year that it took lawyers to resolve privilege disputes after a civil rights attorney was arrested in a terrorism probe in 2002.

Joanna Hendon, a lawyer for Trump, said last month that even the president was ready to "make himself available, as needed" to aid the attorney-client privilege search.

Lawyers for Cohen had pledged that they were ready to work around around-the-clock, if necessary, to ensure there was no delay.

Last month, Cohen's lawyers revealed that his three clients in 2017 and 2018 were Trump, Elliott Broidy — a Trump fundraiser who paid \$1.6 million to a Playboy Playmate with whom he had an extramarital affair — and Fox News host Sean Hannity.

In court papers, prosecutors have said the searches "are the result of a months-long investigation into Cohen, and seek evidence of crimes, many of which have nothing to do with his work as an attorney, but rather relate to Cohen's own business dealings."

The raids were authorized by a federal magistrate judge based on factual information presented by federal prosecutors in New York. They were triggered in part by a referral from special counsel Robert Mueller, who separately is looking into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

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Roger Stone 'Prepared' To Be Indicted In Mueller's Probe

By Marisa Schultz

New York Post, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — Roger Stone, a former political adviser to President Trump, said Sunday he's "prepared" for an indictment from special counsel Robert Mueller as the Russia probe is closing in his associates.

"It is not inconceivable now that Mr. Mueller and his team may seek to conjure up some extraneous crime, pertaining to my business, or maybe not even pertaining to the 2016 election. I would chock this up to an effort to silence me," Stone told NBC's "Meet the Press."

"So I am prepared, should that be the case."

Stone, a longtime ally of Trump's, said neither he nor his lawyer has been contacted by Mueller. But Stone said at least eight of his current or former associates have been "terrorized by Mr. Mueller's investigation."

"I can guarantee you they have found no evidence whatsoever of Russian collusion, nor trafficking of allegedly hacked emails with WikiLeaks," Stone said.

Stone's relationship with WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange, has been under the microscope. WikiLeaks published thousands of hacked documents stolen from the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman John Podesta before the 2016 presidential election.

Before WikiLeaks published the damaging emails, Stone tweeted that Clinton's campaign would soon be over with the help of WikiLeaks.

"Julian Assange will deliver a devastating expose on Hillary at a time of his choosing. I stand by my prediction," Stone tweeted Oct. 6, 2016, a day before Podesta's emails were released.

Stone downplays his connection with Assange and said he received nothing from WikiLeaks or the Russians.

"I had no advance notice of the content, source, or the exact disclosure time of the WikiLeaks disclosures," Stone said. "It is a wild goose chase."

But the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee said Stone's statements in public and to the committee are inconsistent.

"Roger Stone is known for a lot of things," said Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) "Candor isn't really one of them. And either his testimony before our committee was untrue, or his public statements are untrue. Both cannot be fact because they're inconsistent with each other."

RNC Paid Nearly Half A Million Dollars To Law Firm Representing Hope Hicks And Others In Russia Probes

By Michelle Ye Hee Lee And Anu Narayanswamy

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

The Republican National Committee paid nearly half a million dollars to a law firm that represents former White House communications director Hope Hicks and others in the Russia investigations, according to a new federal filing.

The RNC's \$451,780 payment to Trout Cacheris & Janis adds to the mounting legal fees associated with the investigations by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III and several congressional committees of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential campaign.

Hicks hired Robert Trout, founder of the law firm, as her personal attorney in September, according to news reports. The report of the payments for legal and compliance services, contained in the Federal Election Commission report filed Sunday, is the first public disclosure of RNC payments to the law firm since Hicks hired Trout.

Three lawyers at the firm represent people in addition to Hicks in the investigations by Mueller and the House and Senate intelligence committees, according to the firm's website. Hicks, who was one of President Trump's most trusted and loyal aides, was interviewed by Mueller and the House and Senate intelligence panels in early 2018.

Hicks resigned from her White House position in February, and her last day was in March.

Last year, the RNC began tapping a pool of money stockpiled for election recounts and other legal matters to pay the ballooning legal fees of Trump and his associates drawn into the Russia investigations.

Some party officials thought it would be more appropriate to create a separate legal defense fund for the case, The Washington Post reported last year. But RNC officials concluded that it is permissible for the party to pay for the president's legal fees. At the time, party and administration officials were working to determine whether executive branch staff members, who must comply with gift rules, could have their legal fees defrayed by the RNC or private legal defense funds.

A legal defense fund was created in February to help defray the costs faced by Trump's aides who are drawn into the Russia investigations. But it is unclear whether the fund has received or paid any money, as it has not publicly disclosed any information about donations or spending.

A spokesperson for the RNC did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The RNC continued to post strong fundraising figures in April, raising \$12.7 million, for a total of \$173.9 million in the 2018 cycle and \$43.8 million in cash on hand, the filing shows.

The Democratic National Committee raised \$7.8 million in April, for a total of \$92.2 million for the 2018 cycle. The DNC had \$8.7 million in cash on hand and \$5.3 million in debt.

But the main outside groups supporting Democratic congressional candidates outraised their GOP counterparts in

April. The two Democratic super PACs supporting congressional candidates in the midterm elections raised a total of \$11.2 million, compared with \$6 million by the two main Republican super PACs, according to reports filed Sunday and earlier this month.

Among the six-figure donors to the Senate Majority PAC, which supports Senate Democrats, were actor and producer Seth MacFarlane, who gave \$2 million; Cynthia Simon-Skjoldt, a philanthropist and daughter of the Simon Property Group founder, who gave \$1 million; and Bay Area real estate developer George Marcus, who gave \$1 million.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin Says Trade War Is 'On Hold' After Progress In U.S.-China Talks

By Deirdre Shesgreen

USA Today, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — President Trump's treasury secretary said Sunday the U.S. will not impose \$150 billion in threatened tariffs on China while the two countries negotiate a deal to reduce America's trade deficit with its economic rival.

"We're putting the trade war on hold," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Fox News Sunday. "We have agreed to put the tariffs on hold while we try to execute" an agreement under which China would increase its purchases of U.S. goods.

Mnuchin and other Trump administration officials held talks last week with Chinese Vice Premier Liu He, focused on trying to resolve the trade dispute.

The Trump administration had threatened to impose up to \$150 billion in tariffs on Chinese products, part of an effort to address the U.S.-China trade imbalance and to penalize China for forcing American companies to turn over technology in exchange for access to the Chinese market. China responded by targeting \$50 billion in U.S. products.

But Mnuchin said Sunday that last week's talks resulted in "very meaningful progress," including an agreement from Chinese leaders to increase their purchase of American goods. He would not confirm reports that China had offered to increase its purchases by \$200 billion.

"We have specific targets, I'm not going to disclose what they are," Mnuchin told Fox News' Chris Wallace.

Mnuchin said Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross will be traveling to China to follow up on "hard commitments" from the Chinese to increase purchases in the U.S. energy and agriculture sectors.

Mnuchin denied that the Chinese concessions were a result of Trump's promise to help ZTE, a Chinese telecom giant, wiggle out of U.S. sanctions after it was found to be illegally selling equipment to Iran and North Korea.

The U.S. Commerce Department has accused ZTE of violating a March 2017 settlement, in which the firm agreed to pay \$1.19 billion for illegally shipping telecommunications equipment to Iran and North Korea.

Last weekend, Trump suggested he wanted the U.S. to go easy on ZTE, tweeting that he was working with Chinese President Xi Jinping "to give massive Chinese phone company, ZTE, a way to get back into business, fast." In the tweet, Trump said he had instructed the Commerce Department to help ZTE because "too many jobs" were being lost in China.

"We didn't agree to any quid pro quo," Mnuchin said. "That was completely independent of our trade negotiations."

The Treasury chief said all Trump did was ask Ross to look into the ZTE matter, and any changes made to that settlement will be about "protecting American technology" and American jobs.

"This is an enforcement issue," Mnuchin said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Mnuchin Says Trump Putting Trade War With China 'On Hold'

By David J. Lynch

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the Trump administration is putting its trade war with China "on hold" after two days of talks in Washington that he said had produced agreement on increased Chinese purchases of American products and measures to make it easier for U.S. companies to operate in China.

President Trump had threatened to impose tariffs on \$150 billion in Chinese imports unless China made widespread changes in industrial policies that he said required U.S. companies to surrender technology secrets to do business in China. Mnuchin said the two sides have agreed on a "framework" to avoid the sanctions that requires China to lower tariffs on unspecified American goods, protect U.S. technology and buy more made-in-the-USA items.

"Right now we have agreed to put the tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework," Mnuchin said on "Fox News Sunday."

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross will be dispatched to Beijing "immediately" to work out the details of accelerated Chinese purchases, said Mnuchin, who led the U.S. delegation in the talks with a Chinese team headed by Vice Premier Liu He.

The treasury secretary, a former Goldman Sachs banker, would not comment on reports that China had balked at agreeing to a U.S. request for \$200 billion in increased annual purchases, a figure that many economists regard as impossible to execute. Instead, he said the two sides had

agreed on specific targets for individual sectors, such as agriculture and energy.

"We expect to see a very big increase, 35 to 45 percent increases in agriculture this year alone," Mnuchin said. "In energy, doubling the energy purchases. I think you could see \$50 billion to \$60 billion a year of energy purchases over the next three to five years."

Other administration officials have suggested China might buy enormous quantities of liquefied natural gas, though there are questions about the volumes that the limited U.S. export infrastructure could handle.

Mnuchin's remarks came one day after the United States and China released a joint statement that appeared to take a step back from a potential trade war. Larry Kudlow, director of the National Economic Council, said Friday that China had agreed to buy "at least \$200 billion" more from the United States each year. On Sunday, Kudlow appeared to back away from that claim, saying on ABC News's "This Week" that "there's no agreement for a deal. We never anticipated one. There's a communique between the two great countries. That's all."

Some Trump supporters already are questioning whether the administration has blinked in its confrontation with China. "Not good enough. Time to take the gloves off," former steel executive Dan DiMicco tweeted Saturday.

Mnuchin said the president "can always decide to put the tariffs back on if China doesn't go through with their commitments."

Amid concerns that Trump was also preparing to soften the punishment for a major Chinese telecom company that had illegally traded with Iran and North Korea, Mnuchin said the administration "didn't agree to any quid pro quo."

Chinese President Xi Jinping asked his American counterpart to "look into" a Commerce Department enforcement action against ZTE that threatened to put the company out of business. After ZTE violated the terms of a 2017 settlement of criminal and civil charges, the department slapped a seven-year ban on U.S. suppliers doing business with the company. Last week, after Trump directed the Commerce Department in a tweet to help the company return to normal operations, lawmakers from both parties objected. The Republican-controlled House Appropriations Committee amended a must-pass annual spending bill to bar the department from lifting the penalties.

"I can assure you that the president wants us to be very tough on ZTE, and all he did was ask the secretary to look into this," Mnuchin said.

Mnuchin also suggested Trump was prepared to wait until 2019 to wrap up negotiations aimed at a new North American trade deal. He confirmed that the United States, Mexico and Canada remain "far apart" after nine months of talks, having missed House Speaker Paul D. Ryan's deadline

last week to have a deal on which lawmakers could vote this year.

"The president is more determined to have a good deal than he is worried about any deadline," the treasury secretary said.

U.S. Putting New Tariffs On Hold While Negotiating With China, Mnuchin Says

By Andrew Mayeda

Los Angeles Times, May 20, 2018

The Trump administration won't impose tariffs on Chinese products for now, after the two nations made progress on trade issues during two days of talks, Treasury Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin said.

"We're putting the trade war on hold. So right now, we have agreed to put the tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework," Mnuchin said on "Fox News Sunday."

President Trump had threatened to impose tariffs on as much as \$150 billion in Chinese imports to punish Beijing over alleged violations of American intellectual property and unfair trade practices. China vowed to retaliate with tariffs on everything from soybeans to airplanes.

Mnuchin's remarks will be a relief to investors, who had feared the world's two biggest economies were on the brink of an all-out trade conflict. The International Monetary Fund has warned that a global trade war would undermine the broadest global upswing in years.

Still, when asked Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation" whether Trump had taken the threat of tariffs off the table, Larry Kudlow, Trump's top economic advisor, said, "I don't think we're at that stage yet."

"Tariffs are part of any negotiation, and tariffs maybe have to be part of any enforcement," Kudlow said. "You cannot do this kind of major change without using everything that's in your quiver."

Switching positions

It's also not clear how long any truce will last. Trump has often switched his position on trade issues. He has frequently declared that talks on a new North American Free Trade Agreement are going well, for example, only to threaten again to withdraw from the pact.

Mnuchin's comments came after the two nations on Saturday released a joint statement in which China proposed to "significantly increase purchases" of U.S. goods.

The statement released by the White House didn't place a dollar figure on the increased purchases by China, or address a comment on Friday by Kudlow suggesting that Beijing had agreed to slash its annual trade surplus with the U.S. by \$200 billion. The U.S. had a \$376-billion trade deficit in goods with China last year. The figure is \$337 billion when services are added.

Rough estimate

Kudlow on Sunday downplayed the significance of the \$200 billion figure, saying on CBS that "maybe I got ahead of the curve" and during a separate interview on ABC's "This Week" that "both sides have used that as a rough ballpark estimate."

Vice Premier Liu He, a special envoy of Chinese President Xi Jinping, told reporters in Washington that talks with Mnuchin, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer ended with a pledge not to engage in a trade war, according to the state-run Xinhua News Agency.

"We made very meaningful progress, and we agreed on a framework. The framework includes their agreement to substantially reduce the trade deficit by increasing their purchases of goods," Mnuchin said. He said the two sides have agreed to numerical targets but he didn't want to disclose them.

The Chinese are offering to make structural reforms such as lowering tariffs and other import barriers that will allow the U.S. to export "billions and billions" of additional goods to China, Kudlow said on ABC.

'Positive mood'

"We made a lot of progress here in Washington and built on what happened in China," Kudlow said. "The president is in a very positive mood about this. I myself am very encouraged."

The joint statement between the two nations said both sides agreed on "meaningful increases" in U.S. agriculture and energy exports and that the U.S. will send a team to China to work out the details. Kudlow said Ross is going to the Asian nation and will be "looking into a number of areas where we're going to have greatly, significant increases," including energy, agriculture and manufacturing.

Even so, U.S. lawmakers will probably have pointed questions about what the administration has agreed to give up in exchange for a truce with China. In a major reversal, Trump instructed his administration last week to come up with a penalty against Chinese telecom-equipment maker ZTE Corp. that allows the company to stay in business. The Commerce Department had banned ZTE from receiving imports from its U.S. suppliers, a move that crippled the corporation.

'Real backlash'

The administration would face a "real backlash" if it offers concessions to ZTE as part of the trade talks, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) told Fox News.

Kudlow said on ABC that although there may be "perhaps some small changes around the edges" in U.S. action on ZTE, there will still be big fines and other remedies, and, he added, "do not expect ZTE to get off scot-free. It ain't gonna happen."

During the trade talks, the delegations discussed expanding trade in manufactured goods, and each side

agreed to strengthen cooperation on intellectual property. China will "advance relevant amendments" to its laws and regulations in that area, including its patent law, the White House said.

"If we can fix the technology stealing, which is so important in this China story, and we can get these market openings, this will be good for American export sales," Kudlow said on ABC. "I think it's good for Chinese growth. We will have come a long way."

The White House joint statement didn't mention additional U.S. demands, including a halt to subsidies and other government support for the Made in China 2025 plan that targets strategic industries from robotics to new-energy vehicles. China had made its own demands, including giving equal treatment to its investment, and warned U.S. companies may be excluded from measures to open its economy.

"This round of talks is generally positive," said Li Yong, a senior fellow at the China Assn. of International Trade in Beijing, adding that the U.S. still may take a harder line on reviews of Chinese investments. "Trade tensions will ease gradually, but there still could be frictions."

US, China Putting Trade War On Hold After Progress In Talks

By Martin Crutsinger And Paul Wiseman
Associated Press, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States and China are pulling back from the brink of a trade war after the world's two biggest economies reported progress in talks aimed at bringing down America's massive trade deficit with Beijing.

"We are putting the trade war on hold," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Sunday.

After high-level talks Thursday and Friday in Washington, Beijing agreed in a joint statement with the U.S. to "substantially reduce" America's trade deficit with China, but did not commit to cut the gap by any specific amount. The Trump administration had sought to slash the deficit by \$200 billion.

Still, Mnuchin said the two countries had made "meaningful progress" and that the administration has agreed to put on hold proposed tariffs on up to \$150 billion in Chinese products. China had promised to retaliate in a move that threatened a tit for tat trade war.

He said they expect to see a big increase — 35 percent to 45 percent this year alone — in U.S. farm sales to China. Mnuchin also forecast a doubling in sales of U.S. energy products to the Chinese market, increasing energy exports by \$50 billion to \$60 billion in the next three years to five years.

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, who has been part of the U.S. negotiating team, will go to China soon to follow up on last week's discussions, Mnuchin said.

In Saturday's statement, Beijing committed to "significantly increase" its purchases of American goods and services, saying the increase would "meet the growing consumption needs of the Chinese people and the need for high-quality economic development."

Last year, the U.S. had a record \$376 billion deficit with China in the trade of goods; that was the largest by far with any nation.

Trade analysts were not surprised that China refused to agree to a numerical target for cutting the trade gap, but they said the talks probably were more successful in easing trade tensions.

"The Trump administration seems eager to engineer at minimum a temporary peace with China to ensure a smooth run-up to the Kim-Trump summit in June," Cornell University economist Eswar Prasad said, referring to the June 12 meeting scheduled between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

If there is success in the U.S.-China discussions, analysts suggest it likely would involve the countries' presidents this fall before the November elections.

"Part of the good news for markets: As long as both sides continue to be 'constructively' engaged, imposition of additional tariffs by either side is very unlikely," analysts at investment management firm Evercore ISI said in a research note. "There is no reason for either side — particularly the U.S. — to destroy the process that both sides are building, which is what imposing tariffs would do."

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., praised the administration's efforts with China.

"It's smart to engage China on trade abuses, and it would also be smart to get them more involved in trying to help us with North Korea," Graham said.

Trump campaigned in 2016 on a pledge to get tough on China and other U.S. trading partners. He views the U.S. trade deficit with China as evidence that Beijing is engaged in abusive trading practices and has outmaneuvered previous U.S. administrations.

Last August, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer began investigating Beijing's strong-arm tactics to challenge U.S. technological dominance. These include outright cybertheft of U.S. companies' trade secrets and China's demands that American corporations hand over technology in exchange for access to the Chinese markets.

Last month, the administration proposed tariffs on \$50 billion of Chinese imports to protest the forced technology transfers. Trump later ordered Lighthizer to seek up to an additional \$100 billion in Chinese products to tax.

China responded by targeting \$50 billion in U.S. products, including soybeans — a shot at Trump supporters in America's heartland. The prospect of an escalating trade war has shaken financial markets and alarmed business leaders.

In a separate controversy, the Commerce Department last month blocked China's ZTE Corp. from importing American components for seven years, accusing the telecommunications company of misleading U.S. regulators after it settled charges last year of violating sanctions against Iran and North Korea.

The ban amounted to a death sentence for ZTE, which relies heavily on U.S. parts, and the company announced that it was halting operations. A week ago, Trump tweeted that he was working with Chinese President Xi Jinping to put ZTE "back in business, fast." Media reports suggested that the U.S. was offering to swap a ZTE rescue for an end to proposed Chinese tariffs on U.S. farm products.

Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, called Trump's intervention in the case "outrageous" and said that using ZTE "as a bargaining chip ... is not in the best interests of our national security."

White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said there could be "some small changes around the edges" in the sanctions against ZTE. But Kudlow added: "Do not expect ZTE to get off scot-free. It ain't gonna happen."

Mnuchin and Graham appeared on "Fox News Sunday," Warner spoke on CNN's "State of the Union" and Kudlow was interviewed on ABC's "This Week."

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U.S. Suspending New Tariffs While Negotiating Trade With China, Mnuchin Says

By Alan Rappeport And Noah Weiland
New York Times, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — The United States has put on hold its plan to impose sweeping tariffs on Chinese products as it presses forward with negotiations to reduce its trade deficit with Beijing, a top priority of President Trump.

Steven Mnuchin, the Treasury secretary, said on Sunday that the two countries had made progress as they concluded two days of intense trade negotiations in Washington late last week. The planned tariffs on \$150 billion worth of Chinese goods are off the table while the talks proceed, he said.

"We're putting the trade war on hold," Mr. Mnuchin said on "Fox News Sunday."

After finishing the talks in Washington, the two sides released a joint statement on Saturday that offered little detail about what had been decided. Mr. Mnuchin said on Sunday that they had agreed on a "framework" under which China would increase its purchases of American goods, while putting in place "structural" changes to protect American

technology and to make it easier for American companies to compete in China.

While American officials had signaled last week that China had agreed to increase purchases by \$200 billion, Mr. Mnuchin declined to confirm that figure. "We have very specific targets; I'm not going to disclose what they are," Mr. Mnuchin said. "They go industry by industry."

He suggested that under a deal, China would make big increases in its purchases of American agricultural products and energy over the next several years.

Larry Kudlow, Mr. Trump's chief economic adviser, said on Sunday that the \$200 billion number was a "rough ballpark estimate" that both sides had used. It is a figure that simply "interests the president a lot," he said, and is not an indication that a deal of that size is imminent.

"They are offering to make structural reforms, such as lower tariffs and lowering nontariff barriers, which will permit us to export billions and billions more goods to China," Mr. Kudlow said of China on ABC's "This Week" program. "That's the elementary point. That's the key point."

Economists have voiced doubts about the \$200 billion figure, an amount equivalent to more than half the annual American trade deficit with China. They say it would be difficult to increase American exports by anything close to that figure, given structural hurdles in China and limits to how much the United States could increase its production of goods.

Mr. Mnuchin rejected the notion that the United States as part of the trade talks was revisiting its penalties on ZTE, the Chinese telecommunications company that has been crippled by a Commerce Department ban that prevents it from buying American components. Mr. Mnuchin said that there had been no "quid pro quo" relating to ZTE and the trade talks, but that President Xi Jinping of China had asked Mr. Trump to consider offering relief to the company.

Mr. Trump has faced bipartisan criticism for appearing to relent on ZTE, which is accused of failing to punish employees who violated trade controls against Iran and North Korea.

Mr. Mnuchin insisted that the Trump administration was not "going easy" on China over ZTE or the trade talks. He said that Mr. Trump wanted to be "very tough" on ZTE, and that the tariffs could be put back in place if the trade negotiations collapsed. In addition, the Treasury Department is due to unveil Chinese investment restrictions this week.

"He could always decide to put the tariffs back on if China doesn't go through with their commitments," Mr. Mnuchin said.

Mr. Kudlow, in his appearance on ABC, suggested a path that could lead to ZTE's revival, but said it would be arduous.

"If any of the remedies are altered, they are still going to be very, very tough, including big fines, compliance

measures, new management, new boards. The question is whether there are perhaps some small changes around the edges," Mr. Kudlow said. "I think President Trump is doing this because there's some very good feeling between him and China."

"Do not, please, do not expect ZTE to get off scot-free," he added. "It ain't going to happen."

Mnuchin: China Trade War 'On Hold'

By Zachary Warmbrodt And Doug Palmer

Politico, May 20, 2018

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Sunday that the Trump administration will hold off from imposing tariffs on China as leaders from both nations try to hammer out agreements on trade.

The administration had earlier threatened \$50 billion to \$150 billion in tariffs on Chinese goods as a way to deter the theft of U.S. intellectual property and forced transfers of technology.

"We're putting the trade war on hold," Mnuchin said in an interview on "Fox News Sunday." "Right now, we have agreed to put tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework."

The U.S. and China conducted high-level talks in Washington in recent days. Mnuchin on Sunday outlined targets for boosting sales of agriculture and energy products.

"We are immediately going to follow this up with [Commerce Secretary Wilbur] Ross going there with very hard commitments in agriculture, where we expect to see a very big increase — 35-40 percent increases — in agriculture this year alone," Mnuchin said. "In energy, doubling the energy purchases. I think you could see \$50, 60 billion a year of energy purchases over the next three to five years. And strategically that's very important for us and very important for them."

Mnuchin declined to confirm whether China had agreed to a specific commitment to reduce the U.S. trade deficit with the country by \$200 billion.

"We have specific targets," Mnuchin said. "I'm not going to publicly disclose what they are. They go industry by industry."

Trump has repeatedly said China has taken advantage of trade deals, telling reporters on Thursday that the nation has become "very spoiled." On the campaign trail, he said tariffs would be necessary in some cases to show the U.S. is not playing games anymore.

Economist Steve Moore, who is close to the Trump administration after serving as an economic adviser to the campaign, said the teeter-totter nature of the China talks was quintessential Trump, offering that the latest turn was part of his negotiating tactics.

"If there is minimal progress, I do think Trump will impose tariffs on China. It was a major campaign promise of his. And this is a guy who keeps his promises," Moore said.

"I don't see him stepping back from his demand that China open up its markets," Moore added. "Trump is obsessed with the trade deficits ... and there is going to have to be some kind of deal that brings down the China trade deficit."

Removing the threat of tariffs is good news for the tech industry, said Dean Garfield, president and CEO of the Information Technology Industry Council, a lobby group for Amazon, Google and others.

But Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said Sunday that it is up to Trump's team not to "blow it" with China.

"There is nothing wrong with these talks but the proof of the pudding is in the eating," Schumer said in a statement. "If President Xi is going to escape meaningful punishment for ZTE and fail to take strong actions on intellectual property, cyber theft, and American companies having free access to sell goods in China, and instead simply provide a promise to buy goods for the next few years, we will have lost."

Schumer was referring to the Chinese technology company ZTE, which faces stiff penalties for violating U.S. sanctions against North Korea and Iran. Trump said last week that he would look into helping the company escape some of its harshest penalties. After talking with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Trump wrote on Twitter that he and Xi were working together to get ZTE back in business "fast."

On Sunday, Larry Kudlow, director of the White House National Economic Council, said ZTE would not get off "scot-free."

Kudlow also said Sunday that Trump has not completely abandoned the possibility of imposing tariffs on Chinese goods if Beijing doesn't address U.S. concerns about intellectual property theft and forced technology transfers.

"Look, I don't think we're at that stage yet ... The details will be down the road. These things are not so precise. Macroeconomics plays a big role. But our view is China must open up. They must become fair traders," Kudlow said.

Brent D. Griffiths and Christopher Cadelago contributed to this report.

U.S. Puts Tariffs Against China 'On Hold,' Mnuchin Says

By Andrew Mayeda And Mark Niquette

Bloomberg News, May 20, 2018

The Trump administration won't impose tariffs on Chinese products for now, after the two nations made progress on trade issues during two days of talks, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said.

"We're putting the trade war on hold. So right now, we have agreed to put the tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework," Mnuchin said on "Fox News Sunday."

President Donald Trump has threatened to impose tariffs on as much as \$150 billion in Chinese imports to punish Beijing for allegedly violating American intellectual property and unfair trade practices. China vowed to retaliate with tariffs on everything from soybeans to airplanes.

Mnuchin's remarks will be a relief to investors, who had feared the world's two biggest economies were on the brink of an all-out trade conflict. The International Monetary Fund has warned that a global trade war would undermine the broadest global upswing in years.

Still, when asked on CBS's "Face the Nation" Sunday whether Trump has taken the threat of tariffs off the table, Larry Kudlow, Trump's top economic adviser, said, "I don't think we're at that stage yet."

"Tariffs are part of any negotiation, and tariffs maybe have to be part of any enforcement," Kudlow said. "You cannot do this kind of major change without using everything that's in your quiver." Switching Positions

It's also not clear how long any truce will last. Trump has often switched his position on trade issues. He has frequently declared that talks on a new North American Free Trade Agreement are going well, for example, only to threaten again to withdraw from the pact.

Mnuchin's comments came after the two nations on Saturday released a joint statement in which China proposed to "significantly increase purchases" of U.S. goods.

The statement released by the White House didn't place a dollar figure on the increased purchases by China, or address a comment on Friday by Kudlow suggesting that Beijing had agreed to slash its annual trade surplus with the U.S. by \$200 billion. The U.S. had a \$376 billion trade deficit in goods with China last year. The shortfall was \$337 billion when services are added. Rough Estimate

Kudlow on Sunday downplayed the significance of the \$200 billion figure, saying on CBS that "maybe I got ahead of the curve" and during a separate interview on ABC's "This Week" that "both sides have used that as a rough ballpark estimate."

Vice Premier Liu He, a special envoy of China's President Xi Jinping, told reporters in Washington that talks with Mnuchin, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer ended with a pledge not to engage in a trade war, according to a Xinhua news agency report.

"We made very meaningful progress and we agreed on a framework. The framework includes their agreement to substantially reduce the trade deficit by increasing their purchases of goods," Mnuchin said. He said the two sides have agreed to numerical targets but he didn't want to disclose them.

The Chinese are offering to make structural reforms such as lowering tariffs and other import barriers that will allow the U.S. to export "billions and billions" of additional goods to China, Kudlow said on ABC. Positive Mood

"We made a lot of progress here in Washington and built on what happened in China," Kudlow said. "The president is in a very positive mood about this. I myself am very encouraged."

The joint statement between the two nations said both sides agreed on "meaningful increases" in U.S. agriculture and energy exports and that the U.S. will send a team to China to work out the details. Kudlow said Ross is going to the Asian nation and will be "looking into a number of areas where we're going to have greatly, significant increases," including energy, agriculture and manufacturing.

Even so, U.S. lawmakers will probably have pointed questions about what the administration has agreed to give up in exchange for a truce with China. In a major reversal, Trump instructed his administration last week to come up with a penalty against Chinese telecom-equipment maker ZTE Corp. that allows the company to stay in business. The Commerce Department had banned ZTE from receiving imports from its U.S. suppliers, a move that crippled ZTE. Real Backlash

The administration would face a "real backlash" if it offers concessions to ZTE as part of the trade talks, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham told Fox News.

Kudlow said on ABC that while there may be "perhaps some small changes around the edges" in U.S. action on ZTE, there will still be big fines and other remedies and "do not expect ZTE to get off scot-free. It ain't gonna happen."

During the trade talks, the delegations discussed expanding trade in manufactured goods, and each side agreed to strengthen cooperation on intellectual property. China will "advance

relevant amendments" to its laws and regulations in that area, including its patent law, the White House said.

"If we can fix the technology stealing, which is so important in this China story, and we can get these market openings, this will be good for American export sales," Kudlow said on ABC. "I think it's good for Chinese growth. We will have come a long way."

The White House joint statement didn't mention additional U.S. demands, including a halt to subsidies and other government support for the Made in China 2025 plan that targets strategic industries from robotics to new-energy vehicles. China had made its own demands, including giving equal treatment to its investment, and warned U.S. companies may be excluded from measures to open its economy.

"This round of talks is generally positive," said Li Yong, a senior fellow at the China Association of International Trade in Beijing, adding that the U.S. still may take a harder line on

reviews of Chinese investments. "Trade tensions will ease gradually, but there still could be frictions."

— With assistance by Ben Brody, and Elizabeth Dexheimer

Mnuchin Says China Tariffs Are 'on Hold' As Officials Hold Deficit Talks

By Marisa Schultz

[New York Post](#), May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said US tariffs on China are "on hold" as the two economic powerhouses have reached a framework to reduce the trade deficit with China.

President Trump had previously threatened up to \$150 billion in tariffs on Chinese imports over accusations of intellectual property theft.

The US braced for an economic collision as Trump declared in March: "Trade wars are good and easy to win."

"We're putting the trade war on hold," Mnuchin told "Fox News Sunday." "Right now, we have agreed to put tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework."

After rounds of trade talks with China, Mnuchin said: "We have an agreement with China that they will substantially agree to it."

The secretary declined to say whether the agreement sets a specific target of \$200 billion to reduce the trade deficit, but he said the deal has goals for each industry.

"We are immediately going to follow this up with [Commerce] Secretary [Wilbur] Ross going there with very hard commitments in agriculture, where we expect to see a very big increase — 35-40 percent increases — in agriculture this year alone," Mnuchin said.

"In energy, doubling the energy purchases. I think that you could see \$50, \$60 billion a year of energy purchases over the next three to five years. And strategically, that's very important for us and very important for them."

U.S., China Putting Trade War On Hold, Treasury's Mnuchin Says

[Reuters](#), May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Mnuchin: Trade War With China Is 'On Hold'

By Kyle Balluck And Brett Samuels

[The Hill](#), May 20, 2018

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Sunday that a trade war with China is "on hold."

"We're putting the trade war on hold," Mnuchin said on "Fox News Sunday."

"We have agreed to put the tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework," he added.

In an exclusive interview, @stevenmnuchin1 tells Chris: "We're putting the trade war on hold, so right now we have agreed to put the tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework." pic.twitter.com/fJXKozKxK5 — FoxNewsSunday (@FoxNewsSunday) May 20, 2018

Chinese state media, meanwhile, also reported that Washington and Beijing have agreed to back off on tariffs.

"The two sides reached a consensus, will not fight a trade war, and will stop increasing tariffs on each other," Vice-Premier Liu He said, according to Agence France-Presse.

The apparent detente comes a day after the U.S. and China released a joint statement saying the two nations agreed to take measures to "substantially reduce the United States trade deficit in goods with China."

"Both sides agreed on meaningful increases in United States agriculture and energy exports," the statement said.

Mnuchin on Sunday would not specify how much in American products the Chinese would buy. He suggested the Trump administration could reimpose tariffs if China does not follow through.

Senior U.S. officials — including Mnuchin, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross — met in recent days with Chinese officials as the two nations attempted to broker an agreement and avoid a trade war.

Last Thursday, President Trump tempered expectations about whether the talks would be fruitful. The two nations have spent recent months exchanging threats of steep tariffs.

"You've never seen people come over from China to work on a trade deal. Now, will that be successful? I tend to doubt it," Trump told reporters.

"China's become very spoiled ... because they always got 100 percent of whatever they wanted from the United States," Trump said. "But we can't allow that to happen anymore."

Updated at 12:35 p.m.

Treasury, USTR Send Mixed Messages Over Tariffs On Chinese Imports

Mixed signals from officials could further complicate the Trump administration's trade agenda

By Josh Zumbrun

[Wall Street Journal](#), May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Don't Get Distracted By The Trade Deficit With China

Its external imbalances have been declining for a decade. The U.S. should seek more of the same.

By Jason Furman

[Wall Street Journal](#), May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

China Is Winning Trump's Trade War

By Heather Long

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

It was easy to miss the U.S.-China trade statement that the White House released Saturday, right in the midst of royal wedding mania. But it's hard to hide that China looks as if it's winning President Trump's trade skirmish — so far.

The statement said that, after several days of talks, the Chinese agreed to "substantially" reduce the United States' \$375 billion trade deficit with China and that the details would be worked out later. It was noticeably vague.

Notice China didn't agree to a specific amount. On Friday, Trump's top economic adviser, Larry Kudlow, was telling reporters that the Chinese had agreed to reduce the deficit by "at least" \$200 billion. China quickly denied that, and, a day later, the official statement didn't have a concrete number, a seeming victory for the Chinese.

What about the IP fight? The real battle against the Chinese was supposed to be over intellectual property theft, which the Trump administration says has been going on for years and costs the U.S. economy \$225 billion to \$600 billion a year. Trump was supposed to get the Chinese to stop stealing U.S. business secrets and technology. On this front, the statement was brief and lackluster, saying that both sides agreed to "strengthen cooperation" (diplomatic speak for not doing much) and that China would "advance relevant amendments" to its patent law. It remains to be seen whether that happens (and whether China enforces any new laws).

Reaction to the announcement was mostly negative, even among people who are usually Trump allies. Dan DiMicco, a former steel CEO who has been a big supporter of Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs, tweeted shortly after the statement came out, "Not good enough. Time to take the gloves off." He followed that up with: "Did [the] president just blink? China and friends appear to be carrying the day." Fox Business anchor Lou Dobbs summed up the situation this way: "Chinese say 'no deal.'"

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) tweeted, "Why do U.S. officials always fall for China trickery?" Wall Street Journal trade reporter Bob Davis tweeted that the big takeaway is: "Trump administration gets rolled by the Chinese."

Here's a rundown of the many ways China appears to have gotten the upper hand.

China's "concessions" are things it planned to do anyway. The Chinese have one of the fastest-growing economies and middle classes in the world. Chinese factories and cities need more energy, and its people want more meat. It's no surprise then that China said it was interested in buying more U.S. energy and agricultural products. The Trump administration is trying to cast that as a win because

the United States will be able to sell more to China, but it was almost certain that the Chinese were going to buy more of that stuff anyway.

What Trump got from the Chinese is "the kind of deal that China would be able to offer any U.S. president," said Brad Setser, a China expert at the Council on Foreign Relations. "China has to import a certain amount of energy from someone and needs to import either animal feed or meat to satisfy Chinese domestic demand."

China has been buying about \$20 billion worth of U.S. agricultural products a year and \$7 billion in oil and gas, according to government data. Even if China doubled — or tripled — purchases of these items, it won't equal anywhere near a \$200 billion reduction in the trade deficit.

The United States agreed to suspend tariffs. Chinese officials sold the talks as a win for them back home, telling state-run media that the United States had agreed to "not to launch a trade war and to stop slapping tariffs against each other." Chinese media called this the most important result of the talks.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin confirmed that the tariffs are now "on hold" when he appeared on "Fox News Sunday."

Yes, it's good for both sides not to be in a trade war, but the Chinese had more to lose economically from the tariffs. The Trump administration rolling back its \$150 billion tariff threat against China is a good "get" for the Chinese.

China had leverage ahead of the North Korea summit. Trump wants the summit with North Korea on June 12 to go well. It would be a huge breakthrough for the United States and the world and a significant achievement for his administration. The Chinese understand Trump needs them to help make this happen, and they reportedly expected Trump to be more amenable on trade while North Korea is in play. Trump even expressed openness to rolling back restrictions on the Chinese tech firm ZTE, a surprise to many.

"A U.S.-China trade disconnect or worse at this juncture only would detract and distract from mutual progress on North Korea," said Terry Haines, managing director of research and advisory firm Evercore ISI.

It's unlikely that there will be new limits on Chinese investment in the United States. Another Chinese goal is to be able to invest more in the United States. Mnuchin is supposed to be working on strong curbs to Chinese investment in America, another tough measure to show the Chinese that if they won't play fair and let U.S. companies fully operate in China, then America isn't going to be so open to Chinese firms and money.

Monday is the deadline for Mnuchin to "report progress" on the investment barriers. Now it looks as if those limitations are on hold, too, according to a lobbyist familiar with the deliberations who isn't authorized to speak publicly about the

administration's decision-making and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Derek Scissors, a China expert at the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute who advised the Trump administration on China trade last year, also thinks Mnuchin won't push this week for any further blocks on Chinese investment in the United States.

"Mnuchin never had any intention of recommending anything serious that I know," Scissors said.

Zero curbs on China's high-tech plans. There was little in the Saturday statement about IP protections and nothing about China altering its plans for high-tech growth and domination (President Xi Jinping's "China 2025" plan). When the Trump administration originally presented China with a list of demands, it included China agreeing to stop subsidizing its tech companies.

It was always unlikely that the United States would get China to alter its marquee economic growth plan, but it's yet another reminder that the Chinese gave a few concessions on things that aren't sacrifices for China.

China appears to have the upper hand, but this is just the beginning. This is only round one of lengthy negotiations between the two nations on trade, and it was conducted by various secretaries and advisers. Even Kudlow said Sunday that this can't be considered a deal yet. Much could change when Trump and Xi meet face-to-face.

But so far, the Chinese are pitching Trump a "deal" that doesn't alter much on their end. There's hope on both sides of the aisle (and in many parts of America) that Trump will hold out for more.

Confusion And Squabbling Undermine Trump's Steps Forward On The World Stage

By Philip Rucker And Ashley Parker
Washington Post, May 20, 2018

On North Korea, the government of dictator Kim Jong Un threatened to walk away from a planned summit after bellicose words from national security adviser John Bolton — who was then publicly overruled by President Trump.

On China, trade negotiations have been undermined by fierce infighting among Trump's own advisers — including a profane shouting match in Beijing between two members of the economic team.

And the pattern is evident on domestic policies as well. Trump has undercut his own aides and Republican congressional leaders with sudden threats to shut down the government over his promised wall at the border with Mexico.

As an emboldened Trump reaches for historic triumphs in hopes of bolstering his party's prospects in November's midterm elections, he finds himself repeatedly stymied by his old patterns of chaos and contradiction.

Trump's agenda has been undermined by mixed messages and internal squabbles from within his administration — all compounded by the president's own lack of discipline and his inconsistent ideology.

"It's very, very volatile," said Thomas Wright, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. "Normally, there are different factions, and they both fight within the bureaucratic process for their viewpoints . . . but this is much more freewheeling, and the most volatile person is the president."

"It creates confusion and uncertainty and undermines their initiatives," he added.

Amy Zegart, co-director of the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University, said "the one consistent policy that Trump seems to have is that America is getting a raw deal in the world, but how to address that raw deal varies day to day and hour to hour. It is enormously important to have message discipline, and this administration is fundamentally unable to have it."

That lack of discipline has been on vivid display over North Korea. Bolton complicated the delicate preparations for a historic summit between Trump and Kim, scheduled for June 12 in Singapore, by saying the United States planned to ask North Korea to emulate the "Libya model" from a 2003 nuclear deal — to which the North Koreans attribute Moammar Gaddafi's eventual downfall and death eight years later.

But after Pyongyang cited those remarks in threatening to cancel the summit, Trump promised Thursday that his administration would demand no such thing and that under a nuclear agreement, Kim would have protections and be "very, very happy."

"He'd be in his country," Trump said. "He'd be running his country. His country would be very rich."

Still, there remains uncertainty about whether the summit will take place, even as White House officials are busy scouting locations and finalizing itineraries. And Trump has seemed to enjoy taking part in chatter that his work toward denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula could earn him the Nobel Peace Prize, an honor that was bestowed upon former president Barack Obama in only his 11th month in office.

With China, meanwhile, Trump is progressing in negotiations to reduce the U.S. trade deficit, which would fulfill a major campaign promise.

The White House on Saturday released a joint statement from both countries announcing an agreement for China to buy more goods and services from the United States, including agriculture and energy exports, with the stated goal of "substantially" reducing the U.S. trade deficit in goods.

But disputes within the Trump administration have burst into public view, projecting disarray when the team has sought to present a united front.

White House trade adviser Peter Navarro, a hard-line nationalist who penned the book "Death by China," got into an expletive-laced shouting match with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin during their recent trip to Beijing, where Trump had sent them to negotiate trade policy with the Chinese government.

And back in Washington, Trump abruptly ordered his own Commerce Department to scale back the severe penalties it had recently imposed on telecommunications giant ZTE. Trump's directive, which he later said was his answer to a personal plea from Chinese President Xi Jinping, came in a tweet that caught most of his top aides by surprise.

The Trump administration is hardly the first to have vigorous policy disagreements, but in past administrations, those debates largely played out in private, with the staff endeavoring to support the official White House policy in public.

But Trump enjoys, and even encourages, infighting, which often leads to those feuds spilling into the public arena.

"I like conflict," Trump said in March. "I like having two people with different points of view. And I certainly have that. And then I make a decision. But I like watching it. I like seeing it. I think it's the best way to go."

White House officials reject the premise that Trump's policy moves are sometimes overshadowed by episodes of conflict. They blame journalists for focusing on staff squabbles and scold them for not paying more attention to the president's achievements.

Trump's aides say that unwanted headlines — such as White House communications staffer Kelly Sadler joking about the irrelevance of Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) because, as she put it, "he's dying anyway" — do not impair meaningful progress on issues. One White House official cited Friday's summit on prison reform as an example of the quiet work that proceeds behind the scenes.

Peppered with questions earlier this month about a number of administration controversies, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters, "If you look at what he's doing every single day, he's showing up to work, he's working hard to make this country better, whether it's through building our economy, creating jobs, defeating ISIS, fixing our judiciary system, helping with the legal immigration problems that we have."

Most of Trump's advisers have emerged as fully formed public characters in their own right, complete with differing ideologies, backstories and personal agency. As the president has chosen aides who looked as if they were out of "central casting" and elevated them to players in his daily West Wing dramas, so, too, has the media covered them as such — chronicling the petty feuds and internal squabbles in the president's royal court.

"It's almost like an absolute monarch where the various feudal lords are coming to try to figure out whether they can

get something in or something out of whatever decision he's making," Zegart said. "It's astonishing."

Trump, who governs largely by impulse and instinct, lacks a clear traditional governing ideology on a range of topics, heightening divergent viewpoints.

"The president didn't have a very deeply held philosophical view of foreign policy and national security," said Kevin Madden, a Republican communications consultant. "But the policy hands around him have been working on and caring about these issues and have deeply held beliefs developed over the past 25 years."

In this particular era of social media and increased scrutiny on the White House, Madden added, "so much of this just ends up being litigated publicly."

Kudlow: China's ZTE Won't Get Off 'Scot-free'

By Zachary Warmbrodt

Politico, May 20, 2018

Giant Chinese phone-maker ZTE will not get off "scot-free" as the Trump administration considers easing penalties on the company amid broader trade negotiations with Beijing, top White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said Sunday.

President Donald Trump last week made a surprise announcement that he would try to help save Chinese jobs by asking the Commerce Department to relax law enforcement penalties imposed on ZTE for violating U.S. sanctions on telecommunications sales to North Korea and Iran.

In an interview Sunday on ABC's "This Week," Kudlow said penalties on ZTE would continue to be "very, very tough, including big fines, compliance measures, new management, new boards." The question, he said, is whether "there are perhaps some small changes around the edges."

"Do not, please, do not expect ZTE to get off scot-free," he said. "It ain't gonna happen."

The issue is on the table as the U.S. and China negotiate major changes to the trade balance between the two nations. American and Chinese officials held high-level talks in Washington in recent days.

Kudlow, the director of the White House National Economic Council, said Sunday that ZTE "may be part of the overall trade discussion, but it really is an enforcement action."

"I think President Trump is doing this because there's some very good feeling between him and China," he said.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a "Fox News Sunday" interview that it was not a trade issue and that "we didn't agree to any quid quo pro."

"I don't know why anybody's surprised about this," Mnuchin said. "President [Xi Jinping] asked President Trump to look into this. That's not a surprise. President Trump often asks other leaders to look into things that are important to our companies."

Trump's ZTE Push Could Imperil \$150 Million For Terrorism Victims

By Devlin Barrett

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

Families of terrorism victims are warning the Trump administration may negotiate away \$150 million that a Chinese firm was expected to pay for violating U.S. sanctions — a move that they say would send a terrible message to global firms thinking of doing business with rogue regimes.

At issue is President Trump's recent public statement urging the U.S. Commerce Department to find a way to help ZTE, a major Chinese telecom, stay in business. Advocates for terrorism attack victims say the remarks could have major consequences for a fund designed to compensate such victims.

Trump tweeted a week ago that he was working with China's president "to give massive Chinese phone company, ZTE, a way to get back into business, fast . . . Too many jobs in China lost. Commerce Department has been instructed to get it done!"

That message came days after ZTE said it would "cease major operating activities" because the Commerce Department had recently announced trade restrictions on the firm for violating the terms of a 2017 deal for the company's violations of U.S. sanctions.

Now, the Commerce Department is engaged in negotiations with ZTE that could ease the penalties against the firm, according to people familiar with the talks.

The president's instruction to Commerce to ease up on ZTE has led to speculation that the firm may have become a bargaining chip as the United States tries to extract trade concessions from China and get cooperation on sanctions against Iran and North Korea.

But to families who have lost loved ones to terrorism attacks, Trump's actions are important for entirely different reasons.

Under the terms of the 2017 plea deal ZTE struck with a number of U.S. government agencies, ZTE agreed to combined fines of nearly \$1.2 billion — but \$300 million of that was suspended, to be paid only if the company violated its deal with Commerce.

Now that Commerce has formally accused ZTE of lying during its settlement talks and probationary period about whether company employees had been punished for their conduct in violating sanctions, advocates had expected the U.S. to collect that \$300 million.

Under U.S. law, half of that money — \$150 million — would go into a fund created to compensate the families of victims of state-sponsored terrorism.

After the president's pronouncement, those families now fear the administration may back out of collecting that penalty on behalf of victims.

"As a government, we have to send the right signal to ZTE and other bad actors that the United States does not flounder or play when it comes to holding countries accountable that violate U.S. sanctions against state sponsors of terrorism," said Edith Bartley, whose brother and father were killed when al-Qaeda bombed U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998.

To Bartley and others, it makes no sense for an administration that prides itself as being tough on terrorism to suddenly go soft on firms that do business with terror-backing governments.

"Many of these victims of terrorism were serving their country, and the world is watching," she said. "North Korea is watching."

Stuart Newberger, a lawyer representing victims' families, said ZTE should have to pay even more than the \$300 million spelled out in last year's plea deal.

If the Trump administration lets ZTE off the hook for the payment, he said, "all that's going to do is encourage people to do business with terrorist states. So if the president is serious about going after Iran and terrorist states, they have to be serious about holding ZTE to the consequences of its conduct."

A Justice Department spokesman referred questions to the Commerce Department, where a spokeswoman declined to comment.

The fund was created by Congress several years ago for people who have won court judgments as victims of state-sponsored terrorism. To date, the fund has collected more than a billion dollars, principally from settlements with foreign banks accused of violating U.S. sanctions against Iran. Eligible recipients of the fund are those who have won court judgments from terrorism incidents during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, including those who were taken hostage at the U.S. Embassy in Iran in 1979 and the families of those killed in attacks on U.S. personnel in Lebanon during the 1980s.

Mnuchin: Trump Could Tolerate NAFTA Vote Slipping Into 2019

By Doug Palmer

Politico, May 20, 2018

President Donald Trump is more interested in striking a good deal with Canada and Mexico than quickly finishing North American Free Trade Agreement talks to get a vote in Congress this year, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Sunday.

"The president is more determined to have a good deal than he's worried about any deadline," Mnuchin said in an interview on "Fox News Sunday."

"So, whether we pass it in this Congress or we pass it in the new Congress, the president is determined that we renegotiate NAFTA."

Still, that doesn't mean Trump will not follow through on threats to withdraw from the pact or take other action, if he decides that is the best option, Mnuchin indicated.

"He has all his alternatives. I'm just saying right now we're focused on negotiating a good deal and we're not focused on specific deadlines," Mnuchin said. "We're still far apart, but we're working every day to renegotiate this agreement."

The comments came after the Trump administration missed a deadline on Thursday set by House Speaker Paul Ryan for finishing the agreement. Ryan (R-Wis.) has said the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative needed to finish the negotiations by May 17 in order for Congress to vote on it this year because of various statutorily mandated notification and consultation periods involved in the consideration of trade deals.

Ryan amended his comment slightly on Thursday, saying there might be "wiggle room" for the U.S. trade representative to take an additional two weeks to finish the pact and still get a vote in Congress this year. But that assumes that the U.S. International Trade Commission does not take all of the 105 days it is allowed to do an economic analysis of the agreement, he said.

German Companies Worry Trump Moving Toward 'America Alone'

Reuters, May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Oliver North, Incoming NRA Chief, Blames School Shootings On 'Culture Of Violence'

By Frances Stead Sellers And Michael Scherer

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

Two days after a 17-year-old opened fire in his Texas high school, killing at least 10, incoming National Rifle Association president Oliver North said students "shouldn't have to be afraid" to go to school and blamed the problem on "youngsters who are steeped in a culture of violence" in which many young boys have "been on Ritalin" since early childhood.

"They've been drugged in many cases," he said.

Appearing on "Fox News Sunday," the retired Marine, best known for his role in the Iran-contra scandal in the 1980s, said, "You are not going to fix it by taking away the rights of law-abiding citizens."

Instead, he said, schools should look at fortifying their campuses, considering ingress and egress points and people's ability to enter buildings carrying weapons.

"If School Shield had been in place, [it's] far less likely that would have happened," North said, referring to an NRA

program that was introduced in the wake of the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings and addresses best practices in security infrastructure, technology, personnel, training and policy.

There was a risk, North said, in "treating symptom without treating the disease." And the disease, he said, isn't the Second Amendment.

Santa Fe High School was considered a hardened target, with an active-shooter plan and two armed police officers on patrol. In the fall, school district leaders made plans to eventually arm teachers and staff under the state's school marshal program.

North, 74, is a high-profile choice to lead the NRA, which has faced mounting criticism since the Valentine's Day shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., in which a gunman killed 17 people.

North, who previously appeared to criticize student activists who have been pushing for gun control, said today that they "are being used by forces far bigger than they are," including former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg and financier and philanthropist George Soros.

"I was not criticizing those kids," said North, who has said that the NRA was the victim of "civil terrorism."

Texas Lt Gov. Dan Patrick (R) blamed the social acceptance of abortion and violent video games for the epidemic of school gun violence.

"Should we be surprised in this nation? We have devalued life, whether it's through abortion, whether it's the breakup of families or violent movies, and particularly violent video games, which now outsell movies and music," he said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

"Psychologists and psychiatrists will tell you that students are desensitized to violence. Many have lost empathy to their victims by watching hours and hours of video, violent games," he said.

Patrick also pointed to the bullying between adults and children on social media platforms. "We have to look at ourselves," he continued. "It's not about the guns; it's about us."

When asked about gun regulation, he said the responsibility starts at home and suggested that a crime may have been committed if the shooter in Santa Fe was able to take possession of his father's firearms. "Gun control starts at home — accountability for gun owners," he said. "We need the best background checks we have. We need to be very sensible about this."

Santa Fe High School was moving forward with a plan to arm teachers, which is legal under Texas law, at the time of the shooting. Patrick said he had talked to students who said the shooting might have been stopped if one of the teachers, a former Marine, had been carrying a gun. A school resource officer and a school district police chief had engaged the shooter.

He also suggested staggering start times at schools so that students could be funneled through just one or two entrances, a move that could allow law enforcement to more easily detect weapons.

"We cannot sit back and say it's the gun," Patrick said. "It's us as a nation."

At one point during the interview, ABC host George Stephanopoulos noted that violent video games are played by teenagers all over the world but that the United States, which has far more guns in circulation, was unique in its high rate of school gun violence.

"I can't compare one country with another country, because there are many variables in all these countries," Patrick said. "Here's what I know: We live in a violent culture that devalues life. Kids go to schools that are not as safe as government buildings."

Patrick was followed by the parents of victims of gun violence, who weighed in on his suggestions.

"I think those are the most idiotic comments I have ever heard regarding gun safety," said Fred Guttenberg, whose daughter, Jaime, 14, was killed in the February shooting in Parkland. "He should be removed from office."

On "Meet the Press," Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) took aim at the NRA on the issue of why Congress has not addressed gun violence.

"It's a three-letter word," Sanders said. "It's the NRA, and it's Trump and the Republicans who don't have the guts to stand up to these people."

North was followed on "Fox News Sunday" by retired NASA astronaut and gun-control activist Mark Kelly, whose wife, former congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, was critically injured in a 2011 attack in Tucson in which six people were killed.

Kelly agreed that schools had to offer students better protections but said more had to be done to prevent the proliferation of guns and to make sure that irresponsible people and criminals "can't get the gun in the first place."

"There are things that work," said Kelly, who described himself as a hunter who keeps his guns locked in a safe and advocated legislation that requires parents to safely store firearms.

Kelly, who said he owns eight guns, co-founded the Giffords organization with a mission "to encourage elected officials to stand up for solutions to prevent gun violence and protect responsible gun ownership."

The student gun-control activists who have spoken out since the Parkland shooting, he said, are "motivated, smart, articulate and angry." And, he continued, they have "a right to be angry."

The problem, Kelly said, is "not because we don't have enough guns."

If that were the issue, the United States would be the safest country in the world, Kelly said,

North said his goal as president of the NRA is to increase membership of the 6 million-strong organization by 1 million and then to ask every member to recruit one more, to form a 14 million-member group who can be "activists on the street."

In a tweet at the time of North's election, NRA spokeswoman Dana Loesch called North a "total warrior for freedom" and "the last person that anti-gun advocates would want as the new President of the NRA board."

Incoming NRA President Oliver North Blames School Shootings On 'Culture Of Violence,' Ritalin

By Bradford Richardson

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

Incoming National Rifle Association President Oliver North says school shootings are the product of a "culture of violence," not the Second Amendment.

"The problem that we've got is we're trying like the dickens to treat the symptom without treating the disease," Mr. North said on "Fox News Sunday." "And the disease in this case isn't the Second Amendment. The disease is youngsters who are steeped in a culture of violence."

He said everything from violence on television to Ritalin, a drug used to treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, may be contributing to the problem.

"Nearly all of these perpetrators are male, and they're young teenagers in most cases, and they've come through a culture where violence is commonplace," Mr. North said. "All we need to do is turn on a TV, go to a movie. If you look at what has happened to the young people, many of these young boys have been on Ritalin since they were in kindergarten. Now, I am certainly not a doctor; I'm a Marine. But I can see those kinds of things happening."

Ten students were killed and 13 injured Friday when confessed shooter Dimitrios Pagourtzis, 17, opened fire on his classmates at Santa Fe High School in Texas.

Mr. North recommended schools implement the NRA's School Shield program, which would allow certain staff members to carry firearms and provide training on how to respond to school shootings.

"If School Shield had been in place in Santa Fe High School, far less likely that that would have happened," he said.

Oliver North Looks To Recruit Millions To NRA

By Zachary Warmbrodt

Politico, May 20, 2018

Incoming National Rifle Association President Oliver North said Sunday that he wants to expand the powerful group's membership by millions as it looks to fend off gun control efforts amid an outbreak of fatal school shootings.

North outlined his plans in a "Fox News Sunday" interview after 10 people were killed Friday in a shooting at Santa Fe High School near Houston. The massacre has again prompted calls for Congress to take action.

North, best known for his role in the Iran-Contra scandal during the 1980s, said Sunday that he is looking at ways to more than double the NRA's membership of 6 million — an expansion aimed at boosting the group's political clout.

"My goal is a million more members," he said. "Then I'm going to go out and ask every NRA member to recruit one more. That will put 14 million activists on the street — not the types [billionaire philanthropist] George Soros is fielding, not the types that showed up down there in Dallas to protest our right to gather. But those who are going to vote for people who support the Second Amendment."

In discussing Friday's mass shooting, North reiterated the NRA position that guns are not to blame.

"We're trying like the dickens to treat the symptom without treating the disease. And the disease in this case isn't the Second Amendment," the former Marine lieutenant colonel said.

"The disease is youngsters who are steeped in a culture of violence. They've been drugged, in many cases. Nearly all of these perpetrators are male. And they're young teenagers, in most cases. They've come through a culture where violence is commonplace — all you need to do is turn on a TV, go to a movie."

The NRA Versus The Constitution

Its top priority, 'concealed carry reciprocity,' would violate states' rights and cannot pass legal muster.

By Eric Tirschwell

Wall Street Journal, May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

After School Shooting, Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick Says Guns Are 'Part Of Who We Are As A Nation'

By Christal Hayes

USA Today, May 20, 2018

Two days after the nation's latest school shooting, Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick said Sunday that guns are not the problem but "are part of who we are as a nation."

Instead, Patrick, offered a list of other options to curb gun violence: arming teachers, analyzing bullying and video games, staggering school start times and altering the layout of the state's 8,000 schools to limit the number of entrances and exits.

"But remember, we cannot sit back and say it's the gun," he told George Stephanopoulos on ABC's This Week. "It's us as a nation, George. On this Sunday morning when

we all go to church and pray or go to the synagogue or the mosque or wherever we go, let's look inward at ourself as a nation."

Stephanopoulos fired back: "But when we look inward, sir, aren't we going to find that guns are more available here in greater numbers, in greater lethality than any other developed country in the world?"

Patrick agreed there are more firearms in the U.S. but said the reality is that "it is our Second Amendment, you know, it talks about a well-run militia, the Second Amendment. Our teachers are part of that well-run militia, by the way. It's guns that also stop crimes."

Patrick isn't the first to call for arming teachers. He said the state already allows for the measure, but it's up to local school districts, schools and parents to decide whether they will allow it.

More than 170 school districts in Texas have taken advantage of the law, which was enacted after the 2012 massacre at a school in Newtown, Conn.

Patrick also repeated the suggestion he offered after Friday's shooting that killed 10 that school entrances be limited to one or two doors so authorities can better monitor the comings and goings of students, staff and strangers.

Fred Guttenberg, a father who lost his daughter Jamie in the Valentine's Day school shooting in Parkland, Fla., was outraged. Guttenberg, who followed Patrick's appearance on ABC, called the comments "idiotic" and said Patrick should be removed from office.

"Let me be clear, he should be removed from office for his failure to want to protect the citizens of Texas," Guttenberg said. "To hear him continue to make the argument after 10 people died in his state that guns are not the issue is simply a crock."

Also on Sunday, the National Rifle Association's incoming president, Oliver North, appeared on Fox News to talk about the shooting and gun rights.

He suggested schools add multiple metal detectors and that the core of the issue was tied to desensitizing violence. He also appeared to link school shootings to students who take prescriptions such as Ritalin.

"The problem that we've got is we're trying like the dickens to treat the symptom without treating the disease. And the disease, in this case, isn't the Second Amendment, the disease is youngsters who are steeped in a culture of violence," North said. "They've been drugged in many cases. Nearly all of these perpetrators are male."

He added, "If you look at what has happened to young people, many of these young boys have been on Ritalin since they were in kindergarten."

Later, North noted while there's "no way" to prevent a firearm from getting in a building, schools should do more to make it harder for a would-be shooter.

"If that means five metal detectors getting in and out of the high school, you get five metal detectors," he said.

While the attack at Santa Fe High School is at least the 20th school shooting of 2018, shooters over the years have targeted everything from nightclubs, churches, concerts to movie theaters.

Gun-control activists such as Nicole Hockley, founder of the Sandy Hook Promise, have pointed out that the increased security inside schools might be a step in the right direction but won't stop these massacres or address the larger issue.

"This isn't just about school shootings. This is about shootings everywhere," said Hockley, whose son, Dylan, was killed in the school shooting in Newtown. "This is happening in every community, every day. And there are actions that we can take. And prayers are very important. Talking about this is very important. Looking at issues around violence is important."

Contributing: Deirdre Shesgreen and John Moritz

Anti-Gun Backlash From School Shooting? Probably Not In Texas.

By Manny Fernandez, Jack Healy And Dave Montgomery

New York Times, May 20, 2018

SANTA FE, Tex. — One mile from the scene of the shooting that left 10 people dead at her school, Monica Bracknell, a senior at Santa Fe High School, approached Texas Gov. Greg Abbott in the lobby of Arcadia First Baptist Church here Sunday morning.

Her message was simple: The violence was not "a political issue," she told Mr. Abbott, explaining to reporters afterward that schools needed to be safer but restricting the availability of guns was not the way to achieve it.

After the February rampage at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., students there helped ignite the most successful push for action on gun control in decades in that state. There is little indication of anything similar in Texas, a place where guns are hard-wired into the state's psyche, Republicans control virtually all the levers of power, and where the victims of Friday's rampage in a conservative rural area are showing little of the anti-gun fervor that followed the Parkland shooting in a more diverse, suburban one.

In the wake of the tragedy, gun issues are likely to take on a new urgency in a few Texas political races, including Republican congressional districts that Democrats are trying to flip, but the debate is far more muted and dominated by support for gun rights than it had been in Florida post-Parkland.

"Florida is a swing state," said Calvin Jillson, a professor of political science at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. "You start with the understanding that Florida is a

purple state in which Democrats and Republicans are both competitive. Texas is a deep-red state, in which the Republican Party is in complete and total control. They don't feel that partisan electoral heat."

What played out instead was a reminder, as happened after 26 people were killed in a church shooting in Sutherland Springs, Tex., in November, that major gun violence often does not produce a backlash against guns. The differences in how the issue has played out in Texas and Florida illustrate just how hard it can be to establish a consensus on gun issues in America. For gun control advocates, what works in one part of the country does not work in others, even down to the vocabulary used. Some pro-gun Texans question the phrase "gun violence" and avoid using it, saying it is as arbitrary as talking about knife violence.

"People like to say on Facebook, 'Oh, you shouldn't be able to buy a gun,'" Ms. Bracknell told reporters at the church on Sunday, two days after police said a 17-year-old student used a shotgun and handgun, apparently belonging to his father, to kill 10 people, including a substitute teacher, Glenda Ann Perkins, whom Ms. Bracknell had known for years. "That kid was 17. He's not able to buy a gun anyway. It's not like a gun-law issue. This kid is obviously mentally unstable and he knew that there were flaws in the school system to get into the rooms."

The differences between the fallout from the Florida and the Texas shootings begins with the communities where they occurred.

In Florida, parents and students put emotional and public political pressure on lawmakers, and legislators responded just three weeks after the Parkland massacre. The Republican governor of Florida, Rick Scott, signed into law several measures, including raising the minimum age and adding a waiting period to purchase a gun. In Texas, there is no widespread vocal pressure and activism from the families and students themselves. Many Santa Fe students' views on guns track Ms. Bracknell's.

Hours after the shooting on Friday at a prayer vigil, Madilyn Williams, an 18-year-old senior, tearfully told Senator Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas, how she and a friend had fled their astronomy class and rushed to a gas station when the shooting started.

While some students from Parkland had angrily confronted their pro-gun elected representatives after their school was shot up, Ms. Williams quietly told a nodding Mr. Cruz that she wanted her teachers to be armed. It was a refrain in the candlelit park that night: Stricter gun control laws would not have prevented the shooting, several students said. But they believed that arming qualified teachers could have.

"If one of the teachers had a gun, we would have been a lot better off," Ms. Williams said in an interview.

Sid Miller, the state's Republican agriculture commissioner and a former rodeo roping champion, said he wanted to apply "a little cowboy logic" to the gun debate. While Texas may be receptive to certain measures, such as strengthening security in schools, Mr. Miller said, officials will continue to resist other policies championed by national gun control advocates.

"At this stage, any stricter gun control laws passing in Texas, that's just not going to happen," said Mr. Miller, a rancher who has a state-issued handgun license and whose combative social media commentary has outraged Democrats. "You can't protect yourself by taking guns away from the good people."

There are signs of gun control support in Santa Fe. Students held a small post-Parkland march in February. On Sunday outside the school, near where Mr. Abbott laid flowers in memory of the victims, one handwritten sign read, "More peace and love and less guns in this world."

Tyler Cruz, 18, a senior, said he would support any gun control movement that arises at his school now, but he knows his classmates will be divided. "Our community is really pro-gun here," Mr. Cruz said. "I'm pro-gun, but I'm not. I get the Second Amendment, but I just believe it's gotten too far with all this happening."

Mr. Cruz has drawn support from the shooting survivors in Parkland and has been messaging with four of them on Twitter.

Republican leaders in Texas, including Mr. Abbott and Mr. Cruz, have been criticized by Democrats for failing to act in response to the Santa Fe shooting, accusations they dispute. Instead, they and gun advocates nationally talk about a need to act — but not by restricting guns.

Since the shooting, gun rights advocates have called for arming teachers, redesigning school buildings and promoting safer gun storage at home to keep firearms out of the hands of children and teenagers.

Mr. Abbott has proposed holding round-table discussions, saying he wanted to work on laws that will protect Second Amendment rights while making schools safer. Oliver North, the incoming president of the National Rifle Association, Sunday on Fox News blamed mass shootings on violent movies and overuse of psychiatric drugs like Ritalin.

The Republican lieutenant governor of Texas, Dan Patrick, has called for reducing the number of entrances and exits at schools. On the CNN program "State of the Union," Mr. Patrick on Sunday also called on parents to strictly control their guns to keep them out of the hands of children, but he stopped short of calling for specific legislation mandating that.

The gun debate here touches on one of the central divides that shapes politics in Texas: the largely Democratic urban areas versus more conservative rural and suburban ones. Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo, for example, has

bitterly denounced inaction on gun issues, and Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner called on Sunday for new gun control measures and metal detectors in schools.

Santa Fe is a largely rural town in a part of southeast Texas that is home to oil refineries and working-class Republicans who own guns and routinely hunt. The town is only about 40 miles southeast of downtown Houston, but it is closer in its political and social culture to Southern-tinged East Texas. At least a handful of Confederate flags fly around town, on trucks, porches and businesses.

Polling shows the state's voters are more split on guns than popular culture might indicate. According to an October poll by the University of Texas and The Texas Tribune, more than half of the registered voters surveyed said gun control laws should be stricter. Only 13 percent said the laws should be less strict than they are now, and 31 percent would prefer to leave current gun laws unchanged.

But, for now, the pro-gun forces are firmly in control, and deeply conservative voices are not hard to find.

As Mr. Patrick greeted parishioners at Arcadia First Baptist Church on Sunday morning, he got an enthusiastic greeting from Robert Ross, 69, who has lived in Santa Fe all his life and has a nephew who once played football with the gunman. Mr. Ross said he believed the solution to school violence was not gun control, but faith. He blamed the shooting on what he called a cultural decay exemplified by legal abortion, gay marriage and the separation of church and state.

"We wonder why this is happening," he said. "Satan's right there. He's always putting his foot in everything."

Obama Administration Figures Propose Nationwide School Boycott To Push For Gun Control

By Valerie Richardson

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

A pair of Obama administration figures, including former Education Secretary Arne Duncan, has proposed that parents hold their children out of school until gun-control legislation is approved.

Mr. Duncan retweeted Friday a post from Peter Cunningham, who served as the Department of Education assistant secretary for communications and outreach during President Obama's first term, calling for a classroom boycott.

"This is brilliant and tragically necessary," said Mr. Duncan. "What if no children went to school until gun laws changed to keep them safe? My family is all in if we can do this at scale. Parents, will you please join us?"

This is brilliant, and tragically necessary.

What if no children went to school until gun laws changed to keep them safe?

My family is all in if we can do this at scale.

The idea was spurred by Friday's mass shooting at Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe, Texas, which left 10 dead.

Mr. Cunningham, now the executive director of Education Post, followed up Saturday with an article proposing that parents keep their kids out of school on Sept. 4 until Congress passed "background checks for all gun purchases, a ban on assault weapons and high capacity magazines, and funding for gun research."

The message drew enthusiastic responses from several education figures, including KIPP NYC superintendent Jim Manly and Teach for All CEO Wendy Kopp.

Others said that such a boycott would hurt working-class families and strengthen conservative critics of the public schools.

That's brilliant! Then we could push for school choice and non-government solutions to educating children. But in the meantime.. let's think about this on a security level, instead of a political one. Securing schools is possible without restricting the liberties of others. — Bill Brown (@Billb2212) May 20, 2018

Sadly, this would suit the GOP enablers just fine. They want the public schools destroyed. Allowing these random murders is one way of getting what they're after—a stupid general populace, easy to manipulate and exploit. — Lee in Iowa (@Lee_in_Iowa) May 20, 2018

Before joining the Obama administration, Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Duncan both worked for the Chicago Public Schools.

Democrat Mark Warner: No 'Single Piece Of Legislation' Would Have Stopped Texas School Shooting

By Bradford Richardson

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

Sen. Mark Warner says there isn't one piece of legislation that would have prevented the school shooting Friday in Santa Fe, Texas.

"I don't think there's a single piece of legislation, but there's a series of actions," Mr. Warner said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union." "Are there things we can do that would improve the safety of our schools? Absolutely."

The Virginia Democrat advocated better mental health counselling for troubled teenagers, ensuring parents store their firearms more carefully and "reasonable and logical restraints on gun ownership."

He acknowledged that the alleged Santa Fe shooter did not use a "military-style weapon," but said controls on such weapons may prevent similar tragedies in the future.

"Might not have affected this tragedy, but potentially others," Mr. Warner said. "The fact that we should—and this was not a case where there was an assault-style weapon, but the fact that we're the only industrial nation in the world that

allows these military-style assault weapons to populate throughout our whole society."

Mr. Warner said the "epidemic" of school shootings "seems to have gotten much worse in the last 10 years."

But research shows that violence in schools has been declining for decades, along with the overall U.S. crime rate, and nearly four times as many students were killed in schools in the early 1990s as today.

Ten students were killed and 13 injured Friday when Dimitrios Pagourtzis, 17, allegedly opened fire on his classmates at Santa Fe High School in Texas.

Mr. Warner implored his fellow members of Congress to take action on guns.

"But please for those folks that I work with in the Congress, take a moment and let your position evolve," he said. "I mean, there are ways that we can put reasonable restraints without dramatically interfering with people's Second Amendment rights."

Sabika Sheikh Embraced U.S. Culture. One Of Its Darkest Elements — A Mass Shooting — Killed Her.

By Todd C. Frankel, Tim Craig And Brittney Martin

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

STAFFORD, TEX. — The funeral was about to begin, the first of 10 for the victims of the Santa Fe High School mass shooting, and the body of Sabika Sheikh was waiting at the mosque.

Sabika, 17, dreamed of being a diplomat, of working to empower women. A Muslim exchange student from Karachi, Pakistan, she had come to the United States through a State Department-funded study program, excited to leave behind the dangers posed by extremists at home to experience a country that represented all that was possible.

That's what her host family remembered about her, that there seemed so little for her to fear here in Southeast Texas. And then a gunman opened fire at her school, in her classroom.

Now, Sabika was about to be on her way home, 20 days early. A Pakistani Embassy official had urged the medical examiner to work quickly so Sabika's family could bury her properly, a world away. A plane would leave with her body later this night. But first, the funeral.

Outside the mosque here, long before hundreds of people gathered to mourn, two men wondered what had become of America, their adopted homeland.

"I'm aghast," said Abdul Khatri, 60. "People come here because they are told there is peace here. You have the right to be protected here. It's why I came. But to have this happen not in India or Pakistan, but here? We have gotten off track. And it's been going on too long."

"Too long," the other man lamented. "I agree. Too long. But what will we do?"

The grieving in the Houston area on Sunday stretched from this mosque to the many -churches near Santa Fe High School, the public search for answers to an unspeakable crime briefly suspended to make room for mourning. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) attended morning prayers at a Baptist church just down the road from the high school. The Saltgrass Cowboy Church held its regular Sunday morning service. Other churches welcomed their regular flocks, plus those newly compelled to visit.

It was striking that the first funeral was at a mosque, for a student who had barely gotten to experience American culture and ended up being consumed by one of its most divisive issues — the epidemic of school shootings.

"You imagine what it's like for her parents — all their hopes and dreams wrapped up in this child," said Farha Ahmed, an attorney from nearby Sugarland, drawn to attend Sabika's funeral. "And the next time they will see her, she'll be in a casket."

The mourners poured into the Masjid Sabireen mosque in this small town about 35 miles from Santa Fe, removing their shoes before stepping inside. Several students from Santa Fe High made the trip. So did Houston's mayor and two members of Congress. The mayor of tiny Stafford sat down and hurriedly pulled out his phone.

"Can you please make sure all flags in town are flown at [half-staff]," Mayor Leonard Scarcella said into his phone. "Tell him it's urgent."

Sabika's host family from Santa Fe arrived, six children in tow, the mother covering her blond hair with the red prayer shawl she'd received as a Mother's Day gift from Sabika.

Earlier at Arcadia First Baptist Church of Santa Fe, with Abbott in attendance, pastor Jerl Watkins tried to comfort the members of his congregation by telling them that prayer and acceptance of Christian values are the things that will heal this community. But he also pointed to the seeds of what he saw as a broader problem.

"It seems to me, since the 1960s in this country, we've begun to think technology and other things can replace our God, and we've taken God out of the schools, and social media has taken togetherness out of the family," Watkins said to about 200 parishioners, moving on to arguments over violence and abortion. "Many of these video games and movies our children are exposed to on a daily basis is all about thrill and killing and destruction. We've slaughtered millions of unborn children for the sake of convenience, and we twisted the sanctity of morality."

Before the service, which included honoring the congregation's nine graduating seniors, Abbott greeted parishioners in the vestibule. "I'm here to comfort my fellow Texans," he said.

Several parishioners told Abbott they were glad he's not rushing to implement new laws or restrictions on firearms after the shooting, during which a 17-year-old student allegedly gunned down eight students and two teachers with a shotgun and a pistol that police said belonged to his father.

"It's not a gun issue — it's a door issue," said Monica Barcknell, an 18-year-old senior, who like many people in this town think the shooting could have been prevented had the school had stricter entrance and exit policies.

Just 30 miles away, at the mosque, the issue of guns was discussed differently.

"We need to pass laws that restrict guns and other weapons of mass killing," said Javed Malik, the mosque's director, speaking during the funeral.

"And after the funeral prayers, what are we going to do to make sure this doesn't happen again?" said Sheikh Syed, the imam.

Authorities said Sunday that they are continuing to investigate the attack, which they said appeared to be intended to kill as many students and teachers as possible.

Abbott said the suspect in Friday's school shooting was armed with "several different types of explosive devices," including molotov cocktails and devices that use carbon dioxide to explode.

"He had some he threw into the classroom and some, as I understand it, were found in his home," Abbott said after he visited the high school. "So it's clear he wanted to try to use explosive devices, but he did not put them together in a way that they did explode. . . . But it shows this killer was intent on trying to inflict horrific damage on these kids, and my hope is he gets swift Texas justice."

Galveston County District Attorney Jack Roady, who will be prosecuting Dimitrios Pagourtzis on charges of capital murder and aggravated assault of a police officer, said federal prosecutors also might file charges after the FBI completes its investigation.

"We have a lot information and there is a lot of investigation still to be done," Roady said.

Roady declined to comment on whether authorities have uncovered a motive and said neither the victim autopsy reports nor other evidence would be released before a trial. Authorities have said there were no obvious red flags ahead of the attack.

Roady said Texas law allows for the death penalty in capital murder cases, but he said he will not seek death for Pagourtzis because he is a minor; the Supreme Court has ruled that minors are not eligible to face capital punishment.

"If the death penalty were on the table within the punishment range, I believe that we would be seeking it in this case," Roady said. "But the law is the law."

Sabika's funeral on Sunday was brief. The casket was carried into the overflowing mosque, and everyone stood up. Minutes later, the service was over. And Fuad Cochinhala,

president of the Islamic Center of Greater Houston, quietly worked to move the casket outside to a waiting hearse. Several people argued that he should wait until all the speeches and memorials were over. But Cochinwala was insistent. The casket needed to be removed now so it could be taken to the airport.

"I need to get her home," he explained. "That's my job."

The consul general of Pakistan in Houston spoke of "shared grief." Houston's mayor noted that Sabika had achieved her dream of being a diplomat by pulling together two countries. And Sabika's host father recalled how his family had fasted along with Sabika during Ramadan. He thanked her for teaching him about love, "because when people love each other, these kinds of things don't happen."

More speeches were to come. But Sabika's body was gone.

The Turkish Airlines plane carrying her casket was scheduled to depart Houston at 8 p.m. It would travel thousands of miles and make a brief stop in Istanbul. It was scheduled to land in Karachi at 4:30 a.m. Tuesday, local time.

Sabika's family would be waiting.

Craig and Martin reported from Santa Fe, Tex.

Donald Trump Nominees Delayed By More Than Partisan Or Democrats' 'Obstruction'

By John Fritze

USA Today, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — When President Trump talks about the hundreds of vacancies scattered across his administration he's clear about where he places the blame: "Obstructionist" Democrats, he says at rallies and on Twitter, are slow walking his picks.

But a review by USA TODAY of the president's most-delayed appointments, including some who have been waiting for nearly a year, finds a more nuanced explanation that involves timing, concerns about an agency's direction and, sometimes, opposition from Republicans.

Trump's appointment to head the Central Intelligence Agency's office of inspector general has faced questions from Republicans. A proposed ambassador has languished over bipartisan inertia. A nominee to the Department of Health and Human Services was waylaid as lawmakers focused instead on the president's tax overhaul.

Trump has ratcheted up pressure on the Senate, and Republicans are considering a more aggressive schedule to get caught up on lingering nominations for hundreds of mid-level jobs that run the day-to-day operations at federal agencies.

"Waiting for approval of almost 300 nominations, worst in history," Trump tweeted recently. "Democrats are doing everything possible to obstruct, all they know how to do."

Trump has a point: The Senate has taken more time to clear his nominees than those of his recent predecessors — 85 days on average compared with 67 days for President Barack Obama, according to the non-partisan Partnership for Public Service.

Just more than 420 Trump appointees are confirmed compared with 652 at this point in George W. Bush's presidency.

But experts also note the White House got a slow start, and has yet to announce candidates for hundreds of other positions.

"Some of it is partisanship, some of it isn't," said Max Stier, president of the Partnership for Public Service, who believes far too many political appointments require Senate approval.

"Some of it is Republicans who don't like what they see, and want to negotiate something out of it," Stier said. Republican concerns

While Trump's pick to lead the CIA, Gina Haspel, won confirmation last week, another agency nominee has been stalled for months. Christopher Sharpley was named in September as the CIA's inspector general but was ensnared in a controversy over whistle-blower protections.

In Sharpley's case, it is opposition from Republicans — not Democrats — that is most notable. Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, co-signed a letter last year citing investigations into whether Sharpley punished whistle-blowers. During a hearing last fall, Sharpley said he wasn't aware of the probes.

Grassley questioned that testimony, writing that investigators had sought to speak with Sharpley for months, and that they at one point visited his office to review documents.

"It's pretty clear he was misrepresenting his knowledge of the reprisal complaints against him," said John Tye of Whistleblower Aid, a Washington-based group that represents two former CIA employees who filed complaints against Sharpley.

A CIA spokesman did not respond directly to questions about those concerns but said officials are working with the Senate Intelligence Committee "toward a successful confirmation." Sharpley is serving in the job as the "acting" head of the office. Agency record

Stephen Vaden was among the first Trump allies to land at the Department of Agriculture last year, part of the "beachhead" team charged with helping the new administration get its hands around the 84,000-plus employee bureaucracy.

But his nomination to be the department's top lawyer, which was sent to Capitol Hill in September, has stalled for nearly nine months. Almost a dozen others nominated for Agriculture posts have since breezed past Vaden on their way to unanimous confirmation.

Public opposition has come from Democrats and centers on two issues: The reassignment of senior career staff at USDA and Vaden's prior legal work on a voter registration law in North Carolina that a federal court struck down for targeting African-American voters with "almost surgical precision."

Vaden, a Tennessee native, has Democratic opposition but also Democratic support. Three Democrats supported him in committee.

"If it was just Democrats then it would seem Republicans would have already approved him," said Jeff Streiffer with an American Federation of Government Employees local union that represents lawyers in the office.

Vaden has previously said his work on the voter registration law was assigned to him by superiors. A statement from the Department of Agriculture described him as a "keen legal mind" and said that farmers, ranchers and foresters "will be well served by his counsel." Timing is key

Trump tapped Lynn Johnson in June as assistant secretary at the Department of Health and Human Services, where she would oversee a budget of \$58 billion. Her delay appears to be a victim of timing more than partisanship.

Johnson, who runs a county public assistance office in Colorado, was referred to the Senate Finance Committee just as it was gearing up to write Trump's sweeping tax overhaul, which the president signed months later.

That's a common problem for Congress and any White House, said David Lewis, a political scientist at Vanderbilt University. And it underscores the need for to move nominations early in a new presidential term, he said.

"They just were slow out of the gate," Lewis said of the early days of the Trump administration. "If you don't hit the window right after the inauguration then the Senate moves on to other business."

Johnson also faces Democratic resistance. Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, the top Democrat on Finance, warned in a hearing that her nomination "isn't going forward with my support" unless Health and Human Services answered questions about a delay implementing an effort to better track foster care. Who you know

Edward "Sonny" Masso, a retired rear admiral, served as a junior officer with former Trump strategist Steve Bannon in the Navy. His nomination to be the U.S. ambassador to Estonia arrived in early September — days after Bannon exited the White House in a spectacularly public blowup.

Masso, whose father emigrated from Estonia after World War II, never received a hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Neither Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., the chairman who would schedule that hearing, nor the top Democrat on the committee, Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey, responded to questions about what happened to Masso's nomination.

The uncertainty comes at a time when Estonia and other Baltic States have occasionally struggled to interpret Trump's more aggressive posture toward NATO, and his occasionally inconsistent rhetoric on Russian aggression in the region.

Neither Democratic nor Republican senators have publicly criticized Masso. Two sources with knowledge of the process said a bipartisan inertia set in on the nomination following Bannon's departure. The ambassadorship is currently filled by a career diplomat, and experts said it would be unusual to yank him from the job to make room for a political appointee.

A State Department spokeswoman referred questions to the White House, which did not respond to questions about Masso. Controversial office

When Winslow Sargeant was nominated by President Barack Obama to be the chief counsel for advocacy at the Small Business Administration in 2009 the path to confirmation was anything but direct. It took the Senate more than two years to confirm him for the job.

And so Sargeant said he's not at all surprised Trump's nominee for the post, David Tryon, is also confronting delay.

Tryon, an attorney, was nominated in October to lead an office that has long been controversial regardless of who's in the White House. The position was created to be an independent advocate for small business, and can weigh in on federal regulations from any agency if they have an impact on small companies. That alone makes the office a target for opposition.

Todd McCracken, president of the Washington-based National Small Business Association, speculated that Tryon's delay is partly due to partisanship and partly because of "concern in some quarters on the Democratic side with the office itself."

Five of nine Democrats on the Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship voted against Tryon. An aide to Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., said she opposed him because most of his career appeared to be focused on large companies.

But Sargeant said there is an institutional roadblock for the office that has little to do with politics: Because it is set up to be independent of the White House, its nominees often don't get much support from senior administration officials.

"You feel like you're on an island by yourself," Sargeant said. "That's true whether you're a Democrat or a Republican."

Schumer: Deadly 'Super Pills' Are Making Opioid Epidemic Even Worse

By Linda Massarella

New York Post, May 20, 2018

More than a million high-dose opioid "super pills" are prescribed by doctors every month, creating an opioid epidemic that's "on steroids," Sen. Chuck Schumer said Sunday.

A single super pill has at least 80 morphine equivalents, a dosage the senator said is rarely needed in pain management. The OxyContin brand of super pills has the dosage power of 24 Vicodin tablets in one swallow.

"Gaining access to these drugs often begins with the stroke of a doctor's pen, but can lead down a dark and dangerous path that either fuels opioid addiction or results in overdose death," he said.

Schumer said CDC data shows the number one way that people improperly acquire opioids is for free from a friend or relative.

"It terrifies me that a 16-year-old could find a bottle of these super pills in a medicine cabinet and not realize how dangerous they are," he said.

Is Kevin McCarthy Trying To Push Paul Ryan Out Of The Speaker's Chair?

Weekly Standard, May 20, 2018

Top Republicans in Congress and the White House have in recent days entertained a plan to push House Speaker Paul Ryan out of his post over the summer, in an effort to clear the way for his presumed successor, Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, to assume the speakership.

A source involved in the conversations and who has discussed the idea with President Donald Trump told THE WEEKLY STANDARD that Trump believes there is merit to the plan, but has not formed a final position. McCarthy has been weighing the effort alongside a small group of trusted advisers, considering the pros and cons of forcing Ryan's hand, and debating the best time to launch the effort. As of last week he had not spoken to Ryan about the idea, the source said.

Proponents say that the benefits are twofold. It would trigger a vote to replace Ryan, giving McCarthy an opening to become speaker of the House — that is, if he can avoid crashing and burning on takeoff like he did in 2015. But it would also force Democrats to cast votes for — or against — Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, a favorite target of Republican campaign strategists, to be speaker. That vote could then be used against vulnerable Democrats during the height of campaign season, the source said.

Under the plan, Ryan would step down from his post as speaker prematurely but would remain a member of Congress until his term ends in January 2019. The prospect of Ryan's right-hand man amping up the pressure for him to leave sooner portends a significant shift in the power dynamics of the chamber. A spokesperson for Ryan declined to comment. McCarthy responded in a statement provided to

TWS: "Completely untrue. Paul has my total support. Together we are completely focused on our agenda and traveling the country to take our unified message and action to the voters in November."

Ryan has pushed back strongly on suggestions that he might depart early, instead pledging to serve as the chamber's leader for the remainder of his term. Allies of Ryan argue his intent to remain speaker doesn't come from a thirst for power, especially because it is a job he didn't ask for in the first place. Instead, Ryan says that holding off on leadership elections will allow the GOP to focus on campaign season rather than engaging in a bloody intra-party feud.

"I've talked to a lot of members who think it is in our best interest for me to stay here and run through the tape," Ryan said at a press conference last month.

The push for a shortened leadership race began quietly in the days after Ryan announced he would retire. Some members, like close McCarthy ally Tom Graves, asserted that a lame-duck speaker would have diminished power within the GOP conference and on the campaign trail. "We would have more success if there's no ambiguity as to what the leadership structure might look like," Graves told Politico.

But Friday appeared to have been a breaking point for the forces eager to see Ryan step down sooner, after GOP leaders were unable to navigate the demands of the hard-line conservative Freedom Caucus, resulting in the embarrassing failure of the Farm Bill. In the aftermath of the bill's demise on the House floor, a "senior Republican source" lashed out at Ryan in a Politico story about the legislative failure. The "senior Republican source" argued that "this is the problem when you have a lame duck speaker who announces he's leaving eight months in advance."

"He can make calls to members to urge them to vote for something, but who will care?" the individual added.

A remarkably similar quote later appeared in The Hill, also attributed to a senior GOP source. "If you have somebody who's going to be stepping down eight months in advance, a lot of people are not going to care what you have to say," the source said.

McCarthy's first run for speaker failed for a number of reasons. He drew Republican criticism during the race when he made comments implying the Benghazi investigation was politically-motivated. "Everybody thought Hillary Clinton was unbeatable, right? But we put together a Benghazi special committee, a select committee. What are her numbers today? Her numbers are dropping," McCarthy said on Fox News. "Why? Because she's untrustable. But no one would have known any of that had happened, had we not fought."

Those remarks were condemned immediately by Republicans involved in the investigation. "That was not the reason we started. We started because there were four dead Americans and we didn't have answers," Jason Chaffetz, who challenged McCarthy for the speakership, said at the time.

On top of his Benghazi gaffe, McCarthy struggled to win the support of conservative members, some of whom were reluctant to support him amid concerns that he would not represent enough of a change from the tactics of former speaker John Boehner.

Three years later, Ryan argues that McCarthy has accumulated more political experience than he had the first time around. "I think we all believe that Kevin is the right person," Ryan said during an interview with NBC after he announced his retirement.

But conflict between McCarthy and Ryan has been growing.

The two hold vastly different opinions about how to approach the DACA debate in the House. While Ryan has repeatedly said he would like to find a solution to the issue — recently saying he wants to vote on an immigration measure before the election — McCarthy is far more skeptical about the political benefits of doing so. During a Republican conference meeting last week, he told members that "If you want to depress [GOP voter] intensity, this is the No. 1 way to do it," Politico's Rachael Bade reported.

That argument highlights the difference in their leadership styles, with Ryan more policy-focused and McCarthy more interested in politics. Right now, the speaker's race is more of a shadow campaign to win favor from the conference — "This is the time of the year where I get all the area codes I've never seen before on my phone," Kentucky Republican Thomas Massie quipped — but members are having heated conversations about who they want to lead the party.

Other contenders for the role include Freedom Caucus founding member Jim Jordan, and Majority Whip Steve Scalise. Scalise has said he would not run against McCarthy, but members say it is likely he would run if McCarthy proves unable to garner enough support for the position.

Trump Weighs Coup Against Paul Ryan: Report

By Steven Nelson

Washington Examiner, May 20, 2018

President Trump has been briefed on plans to force House Speaker Paul Ryan out of office this summer and is considering lending his support, according to a new report.

A source who discussed the idea with Trump told The Weekly Standard that the president "believes there is merit to the plan, but has not formed a final position."

The plan is to replace Ryan quickly with House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., in part to strengthen the power of the speaker's office after conservative lawmakers blocked a sweeping farm bill last week.

Ryan, a Wisconsin Republican, plans to step down from the leadership post in January when he retires from Congress.

McCarthy has not spoken with Ryan about the plan, according to the report, and he denied that he's considering supporting a coup, telling The Weekly Standard in a statement that the claim was "completely untrue" and that "Paul has my total support."

Although McCarthy is considered a front-runner, Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, also is considering seeking the leadership position. House Majority Whip Steve Scalise, R-La., was seen as a contender, but said in April he would not run against McCarthy.

McCarthy, who has courted a close relationship with Trump, abruptly dropped out of the 2014 speaker's race to replace Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio, when faced with conservative opposition and rumors about a relationship with a fellow member of Congress.

Editor's note: The Washington Examiner and the Weekly Standard are owned by the same parent company, Clarity Media Group.

CBS News Nation Tracker Poll: Americans Give Trump Credit For Good Economy, Mixed Reviews On N.K.

By Anthony Salvanto, Jennifer De Pinto, Fred Backus
And Kabir Khanna

CBS News, May 20, 2018

Nearly two in three Americans think the nation's economy is in good shape, and most of them believe President's Trump's policies are at least somewhat responsible for that. More Republicans rate the economy positively than do Democrats.

As Congressional primaries continue and Americans look ahead six months to their midterm votes, President Donald Trump looks like a positive factor among Republicans, seven in 10 of whom say they'd prefer a candidate he backs — but the president's influence is limited to his own party. More Independents say they're less likely to support a candidate backed by President Trump.

Meanwhile on the Democratic side, Senator Bernie Sanders carries more positive influence with both Democratic voters and independents than does Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. More than half of Democrats say they'd be more likely to vote for a candidate endorsed by Sanders, while a majority of Democrats say a Pelosi endorsement wouldn't affect their vote. Nearly half of independents say knowing a candidate was backed by Pelosi would make them less likely to back that candidate themselves.

Given a list of many different types of candidates to choose from, Democrats tend to divide between preferring either a moderate or a progressive Democrat. Republicans,

meanwhile, strongly prefer a Congressional candidate who would be in line with Mr. Trump (75 percent) to a Republican who would act more independently from Mr. Trump (just 17 percent.)

Women candidates of both parties have been winning primaries of late, but there are partisan differences on what impact women might have. Most Democrats think Congress would work better if there were more women Representatives. Most Republicans and independents say Congress would remain the same.

This survey has followed the levels of Trump support and opposition over time. Today, buoyed by their feelings that the economy is at least somewhat good, the ranks of Mr. Trump's strongest backers have risen to 22% from 18% back in January. Many of these backers had previously adopted a wait-and-see approach, labeling themselves as more conditional in their support a few months ago. Supporters overall – both strong and conditional – together remain less than a majority, however, while the ranks of the strongest Trump opponents have remained steady.

Still, overall, a majority of Americans feel the President is looking out a lot for the wealthy and big business, and his own business interests – more so than they feel he is looking out for them. However, there are big divides on this, as there have been throughout his Presidency: his core supporters are the most steadfast in saying that he is looking out for their interests, as well as those of the working and middle class overall.

People who are more conditional supporters are slightly more likely to say he's looking out a lot for business – including his own – more so than people like them. One of the biggest indicators of being a strong Trump supporter is that those backers feel he is looking out for people like them above big business, the wealthy, and his own business interests. And they give him much more credit for the economy than do others, including more conditional backers.

Most Republicans think Mr. Trump is keeping his campaign promises: 50 percent say he is keeping most of them, and another third say he's keeping some and hasn't gotten around to the others yet. The President's strongest backers are especially likely to say he's keeping most of the promises he made during the campaign.

Americans give Mr. Trump mixed marks on his approach to negotiations and deal making so far. More than half have not much or no confidence in his handling of issues with North Korea and Iran. A slim majority say his approach to China has been about right.

There are partisan divides on these measures. Two-thirds of Republicans say the President's negotiations have already been successful, and most express a lot or some confidence in his handling of North Korea and Iran. Democrats, on the other hand, call the President's negotiations and deal making unsuccessful.

Many Americans (47 percent) feel it's too soon to say whether a potential meeting between Mr. Trump and Kim Jong-Un would produce actual steps toward North Korea ending its nuclear program. But they are almost twice as likely to think that won't happen (35 percent) than think it will (18 percent). Republicans are more inclined than Democrats to think a meeting could lead to North Korea ending its nuclear program, but a majority of them think it's too soon to say.

Boom: Team Trump Cuts Nearly Twice As Many Regulations As Promised

By Paul Bedard

Washington Examiner, May 20, 2018

The Trump administration is showing no signs of slowing its slashing of Obama-era regulations, beating their plans to cut two for every new rule and saving more than double what was hoped for, according to a new report.

"The Trump administration is making substantial deregulatory progress," said a new report from American Action Forum.

"The administration is prioritizing deregulation, and it is set to double its goals of a two-for-one deregulatory-to-regulatory ratio and \$686.6 million in net savings," said the report from forum experts Dan Bosch, director of regulatory policy, and Dan Goldbeck, a senior analyst.

When he came to office, Trump promised to cut two regulations for every new one he imposed.

The duo said that the percentage is actually 3.75 to 1, an unprecedented reduction.

Trump believes that cutting regulations, while it receives few headlines, is one of his team's biggest accomplishments and a driver in the improving economy and investment in the United States.

The Labor Department and Health and Human Services currently lead the regulation cutting pack in the detailed report seen here.

The Trump Administration's Deregulatory Progress And Forecast

American Action Forum, May 17, 2018

Covered rulemakings in the Unified Agenda have a current deregulatory-to-regulatory ratio of 3.75 to 1, exceeding the Trump Administration's goal of 2-to-1.

Executive agencies have exceeded the Trump Administration's annualized savings target by \$517.4 million.

Looking forward, executive agencies are on target to double their annualized savings goal of \$686.6 million.

INTRODUCTION

In releasing the Spring 2018 Unified Agenda of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions on May 9th, the Trump Administration stated that the agenda demonstrated its

"ongoing commitment to responsible regulatory reform and progress toward eliminating unnecessary regulatory burdens."

Indeed, the Trump Administration is making substantial deregulatory progress, as this initial review published by the American Action Forum notes – both in terms of the number of rulemakings and the estimated costs and savings included in published final rules.

While there are 2,226 active rulemakings currently underway at federal agencies, this study focuses on those rules that have received a designation under Executive Order (EO) 13,771. That order requires executive agencies to reduce regulatory burden and meet cost savings targets by using deregulatory actions to cancel out costs of new, significant regulatory actions.

According to the Unified Agenda, 499 regulations are designated as deregulatory while 133 are regulatory and significant enough to be covered by EO 13,771. The ratio of 3.75 to 1 exceeds the order's goal of 2 to 1. AGENCY BY AGENCY EO 13,771 RULEMAKINGS

The table below breaks down the 499 deregulatory rulemakings and 133 regulatory rulemakings by agency.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) tops the list of active deregulatory and regulatory actions, as it did in our review of the fall 2017 Unified Agenda. However, its totals did not remain static. The department increased its number of planned deregulatory actions by 27 and decreased its planned regulatory actions by 21.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) remained second in deregulatory and regulatory actions. It is planning seven more deregulatory actions than in the fall and one less regulatory action.

The Department of the Interior broke a tie for third with the Department of Agriculture by adding three new deregulatory actions. The Department of the Treasury plans the third-most regulatory actions.

To get a better sense of why the numbers for some agencies changed from the fall 2017 agenda, AAF analyzed the active actions of the DOT, since that agency had the most EO 13,771 actions. Forty of the active deregulatory actions in the new agenda were not listed as such in the fall. Of these, 31 appear in the Unified Agenda for the first time, five were on the long-term actions list, three were designated as regulatory actions previously, and one had no designation.

On the regulatory side of the ledger, three actions are new to the active list. Two were previously designated exempt from EO 13,771 under the "other" exemption and one was previously designated as not significant. Twenty-four actions that were planned in the fall 2017 agenda, however, no longer appear as active. Of these, 12 were reclassified from regulatory to the "other" category, three were reclassified to long-term actions, three were reclassified as deregulatory, three were reclassified as fully or partially

exempt from EO 13,771, two were completed, and one was reclassified as not significant. The likely reason for all these reclassifications is that further analysis, either by the agency or the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), produced some sort of divergent conclusion. AGENCY DEREGULATORY PROGRESS

While the fall 2017 Unified Agenda provided the regulatory budget framework for agencies during Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 (ending on September 30, 2018), the recent agenda merely updated the list on rulemakings currently underway.

To provide a look at how agencies are fairing at reaching their budget targets so far, this study analyzes the 41 final rules published in the Federal Register (through May 11) that were designated as regulatory or deregulatory under EO 13,771 and included estimated costs or cost savings. The results of this analysis appear in the table below. Agencies in red have not met their budgetary goal yet, while agencies in green have met or exceeded it.

Executive agencies have thus far exceeded their cumulative target by a substantial margin. OIRA set a goal of \$686.6 million in annualized savings. So far, executive agencies have exceeded this goal by 75 percent.

As the table shows, 13 agencies have already met or exceeded their savings target – some by a substantial margin. The Department of Labor currently has published the most savings, primarily due to a delay of the effective date of its Fiduciary Rule (\$291.1 million). HHS comes in a close second on savings from two Medicare rules totaling \$511.5 million. Had HHS not implemented a Medicare rule that cost \$296 million, however, it would be far ahead of all other agencies. DOT and the Department of Justice are currently third and fourth, respectively.

Nine agencies still have some work left to do. The three agencies with the largest shortfalls currently are in the top four of budgeted savings targets: Interior, Energy, and Defense. According to OIRA guidance, agencies that fail to meet their budget target in the current fiscal year must develop a plan to get into compliance, and explain why they failed to do so.

It is important to keep in mind that this analysis is just a snapshot of the present, and there is still plenty of time for agencies to publish rules with costs or savings. OIRA is nevertheless likely pleased with what has been accomplished so far. REGULATORY BUDGET PROJECTION

The analysis above reveals the progress agencies have made individually over the past year in implementing EO 13,771. The Unified Agenda, however, is still primarily a prospective document that lays out the administration's plans for the near future. To that end, it shows a continuing deregulatory push that could result in cost savings of double their stated goal for FY 2018.

The table below includes general findings for what has happened to-date in FY 2018 and what may happen in its final months. For the prospective part of this analysis, AAF examined Unified Agenda entries in the Final Rule stage with either "Economically Significant" or "Other Significant" designations that agencies expected to act upon by September 2018.

All "regulatory" cost figures below come from agency estimates of either that direct action or an earlier phase (such as a proposed rule) of that rulemaking. All "deregulatory" figures come from agency estimates of either that direct action or the estimated annual costs of the original regulatory action it targets. These calculations show some potential, quantified impact. Some of these figures (from either proposed versions or past regulations marked for change) may not be exactly the same after they wind through the regulatory process. Cost/Saving Totals may not match exactly due to rounding.

The most notable finding in this analysis is the potential net total of \$1.376 billion in projected savings. That amounts to almost exactly double the amount of the administration's goal of \$686.6 million in annualized savings. The relevant agencies arrive at this figure largely on the heels of the progress they've already made. Although the next few months are projected to be net-deregulatory, they are not nearly as prodigious as those to-date. The sample included in the table above, however, merely includes those rules with a quantifiable estimate attached. As apparent earlier, there are many rules outside this sample that agencies expect to include in FY 2018's regulatory budget, and further information regarding their effects may be forthcoming as they reach the final rule stage. MAJOR RULE SCHEDULE

The following tables provide a chronological sample of major rules that have some attributable cost or cost-saving estimate in the current edition of the Unified Agenda. Rulemakings designated as deregulatory measures are italicized. EO 13,771 measures an agency's "tally" in annual costs or cost savings, and since annual cost estimates help mitigate some of the inconsistencies in measuring past impacts against future ones, the tables below include such estimates in their annualized form (to the extent possible).

As with the projections above, we included an either the relevant proposed rulemaking's estimate or (in the case of some deregulatory actions) costs of the original regulation it addresses. Therefore, it includes the same caveat that some of the individual estimates may shift as these actions become finalized. 1 The only quantified estimate provided in the proposed rule was for "regulatory familiarization" costs. However, DOL anticipates the final rule to be primarily deregulatory for the purposes of EO 13,771. CONCLUSION

The Unified Agenda's release usually comes and goes with little fanfare, but it is still an illuminating document for discerning an administration's regulatory – or deregulatory –

priorities. This update is now the third from the Trump Administration, and its rulemaking record is becoming more fully formed. The administration is prioritizing deregulation, and it is set to double its goals of a two-for-one deregulatory-to-regulatory ratio and \$686.6 million in net savings.

EPA's Pruitt, Praised For Effectiveness, Hits Bumps In His Rollback Campaign

By Juliet Eilperin And Brady Dennis

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

In March, as part of Scott Pruitt's aggressive campaign to roll back federal regulations, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed relaxing standards for storing potentially toxic waste produced by coal-burning power plants.

EPA officials cited a study indicating that forcing utilities to get rid of unlined coal ash ponds too quickly could strain the electrical grid in several regions of the country.

But when environmental advocates scrutinized the specifics, they discovered a problem: The evidence cited was not established scientific research. Instead, the agency was relying on a four-page document by the utility industry's trade association, the Edison Electric Institute, which has acknowledged that its conclusions were not "part of or a summary of a larger study."

Lisa Evans, a lawyer for the group Earthjustice, was among the advocates who seized on that omission, as well as on gaps in technical data and other evidence, to argue that the agency's action was ill-advised and legally flimsy.

"The record does not support the proposal," Evans said, noting that the Obama administration's 2015 requirement on coal ash drew on years of public input and peer-reviewed scientific studies. "I've never seen a rule like this, in terms of the thinness of the evidence."

The coal ash proposal is among the more than half-dozen major moves that the EPA has seen snagged by procedural and legal problems. The delays threaten to tarnish Pruitt's image as an effective warrior in President Trump's battle against federal regulations, a reputation that has so far saved the EPA administrator his job amid an array of investigations into ethical and management lapses.

Earlier this month, the White House Office of Management and Budget sent back a proposal to ease emissions restrictions for refurbished heavy-duty trucks and ordered the agency to analyze the proposal's economic impact. That move followed a separate OMB request in April that the EPA offer "some analysis" to show that it would actually yield environmental benefits.

The EPA's own science advisers have called for a review of the "adequacy" of research used not only to justify revoking the truck rule but to reverse fuel-efficiency standards for cars. And over the past year, courts have halted or reversed multiple Pruitt initiatives, in one case forcing the

EPA to restore limits on methane leaks from oil and gas operations after a federal appeals panel concluded that their suspension was illegal.

Jeffrey Holmstead, a partner at the law firm Bracewell LLP, who headed the EPA's air and radiation office under President George W. Bush, thinks it is "premature" to evaluate how durable Pruitt's reforms will be.

"Early on, before they really had their folks in place, they sent over a lot of rules that didn't have a lot of technical support," Holmstead said, adding that in recent months the Senate has confirmed numerous appointees who previously served at the EPA and so are more experienced in working with career staff. "A lot more work is getting done."

EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox said in a statement that the agency "has been vigorously carrying out President Trump's regulatory reform agenda, consistent with applicable laws and executive orders." He noted that last year alone, nearly 40 actions — "including 10 economically significant regulations" — completed their interagency review at the OMB.

But federal records and interviews reveal how much White House officials and staff in other agencies have questioned whether the EPA is meeting the legal requirements necessary to revise Obama-era actions.

The OMB recently posted a document with tracked changes highlighting an extensive rewrite of the agency's proposal to revoke stricter tailpipe emissions for cars and light trucks. Pruitt concluded that higher mileage targets for vehicles produced between model years 2022 and 2025 are "not appropriate" because automakers can't achieve them. Among the red-line changes was an added reference noting that some outside groups, including the Union for Concerned Scientists, believe that the thresholds can be met.

"The rules are coming in undercooked," said Amit Narang, regulatory policy advocate for the watchdog group Public Citizen.

The agency, for example, is drafting a "supplemental rule" to one proposed last year that would change federal oversight over more than half of the nation's water bodies. It already is being sued over its push to revoke the 2015 "Waters of the U.S." rule, which affects activities that could drain wetlands and intermittent streams. According to officials, the supplemental language would address White House concerns that the EPA needs to clarify what would actually take the place of the regulation once it is abolished.

Despite such missteps, both critics and supporters of Pruitt agree he has been effective in reshaping the agency through his executive powers. He issued directives changing what sort of data can be used to calculate air-quality standards throughout the country and which studies can factor into public health rules. He scrapped a two-decades-old policy requiring that once a power plant was deemed a

"major" polluter, it would always face the most stringent regulations, even if its emissions fell.

The administrator is not letting up, either. His agency's recent "unified agenda" signals an aggressive deregulatory push in the months ahead.

Holmstead points out that on significant actions, such as reevaluating vehicle fuel-efficiency standards or undoing the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan, the EPA's final decisions matter far more than the initial ones.

"On the big rules, we still haven't seen the final rules, and that's where you see the record that has to justify things," he said.

Yet critics are looking to exploit the early procedural errors as they challenge Pruitt's efforts in court. More than 70 lawsuits have been filed against the EPA's regulatory actions, according to an analysis by the office of Sen. Thomas R. Carper (D-Del.). Of the six cases that have had a full court review, the agency has lost four and delayed arguments in one.

With the proposal on coal ash — intended to give states and utilities more latitude when disposing of the waste — opponents have seized on the fact that there's no study underpinning the EPA's position. The current requirement means that most coal ash ponds that pollute nearby groundwater or lie in unsafe areas must close within six months of contamination being detected.

Although the Edison Electric Institute document cited by the EPA draws from a 32-page report on summer electricity demand by the North American Electric Reliability Corp., that analysis does not speak to the issue of coal ash disposal.

Institute official James Roewer, who runs an industry coalition on coal ash, said in an email that the document "is not part of or a summary of a larger study; there isn't more detailed information that wasn't provided to EPA. It is simply a high-level review."

Last month, scores of people assembled in the ballroom of a Doubletree Hotel in Arlington, Va., to testify at a public hearing on the proposal. They represented a cross section of Americans — tribal members from Nevada and New Mexico, Girl Scouts from Illinois, a mother from Missouri, a doctor from Indiana. They described how nearby coal ash pits have affected the health of their communities and implored EPA officials not to change course.

"If anything, we should be here making the rules and regulations stronger, not weaker," said Rachael O'Reilly, 30, of Peoria, Ill., which she said lies downstream from two coal plants. "Why are we here moving backwards?"

HUD Drops Obama-Era Tool Aimed At Enforcing Fair Housing Law

Housing advocates accuse Trump administration of assaulting former President Obama's key policy

By Laura Kusisto

Wall Street Journal, May 18, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

U.S. Government Bonds Pay More Than Debt From Other Developed Nations

Higher yields reflect investors' struggle to reconcile expectations for faster U.S. growth with concerns about impact of deficits and inflation

By Daniel Kruger

Wall Street Journal, May 20, 2018

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HSTODAY BORDER/IMMIGRATION



May 31, 2018



Agency Didn't Lose Unaccompanied Migrant Children, Argues HHS

By Bridget Johnson

The Department of Health and Human Services insisted this week that they have not lost immigrant children under their care as a social media campaign coupled the controversy over tracking of unaccompanied minors with protest over the Trump administration's policy on separating families at the border.

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Drone Use by Public Safety Agencies Increased 82 Percent Over Past Year



An update to the Bard College's Center for the Study of the Drone's database of public safety agencies with drones estimates that at least 910 state and local police, sheriff, fire, and emergency services agencies in the U.S. have acquired drones.

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South Carolina Launching First-in-Nation Drones to Watch Inmates



After spending years fighting to keep drones from flying over prisons, South Carolina corrections officials unveiled plans on Thursday to use the small unmanned aircraft to keep a remote eye on inmates, an effort they said is the first of its kind in the country.



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39 Illegal Aliens Discovered in South Texas Human Smuggler 'Stash House'

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Second Iteration of Operation Sandman Leads to 170 Arrests Involving Human Smuggling



Special Operations Detachment and Intelligence Border Patrol agents detected and apprehended 170 suspects near the Imperial Sand Dunes west of Yuma during a three-week Border Patrol operation between April and May.

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ICE Arrests 156 During Operation Keep Safe in Chicago Area



Federal officers with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) arrested 156 criminal aliens and immigration violators in the Chicago metropolitan area during a six-day enforcement action, which ended Thursday.

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Sessions Moves to Stop 'Administrative Closure' of Immigration Cases

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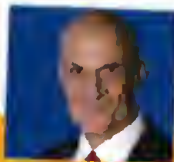
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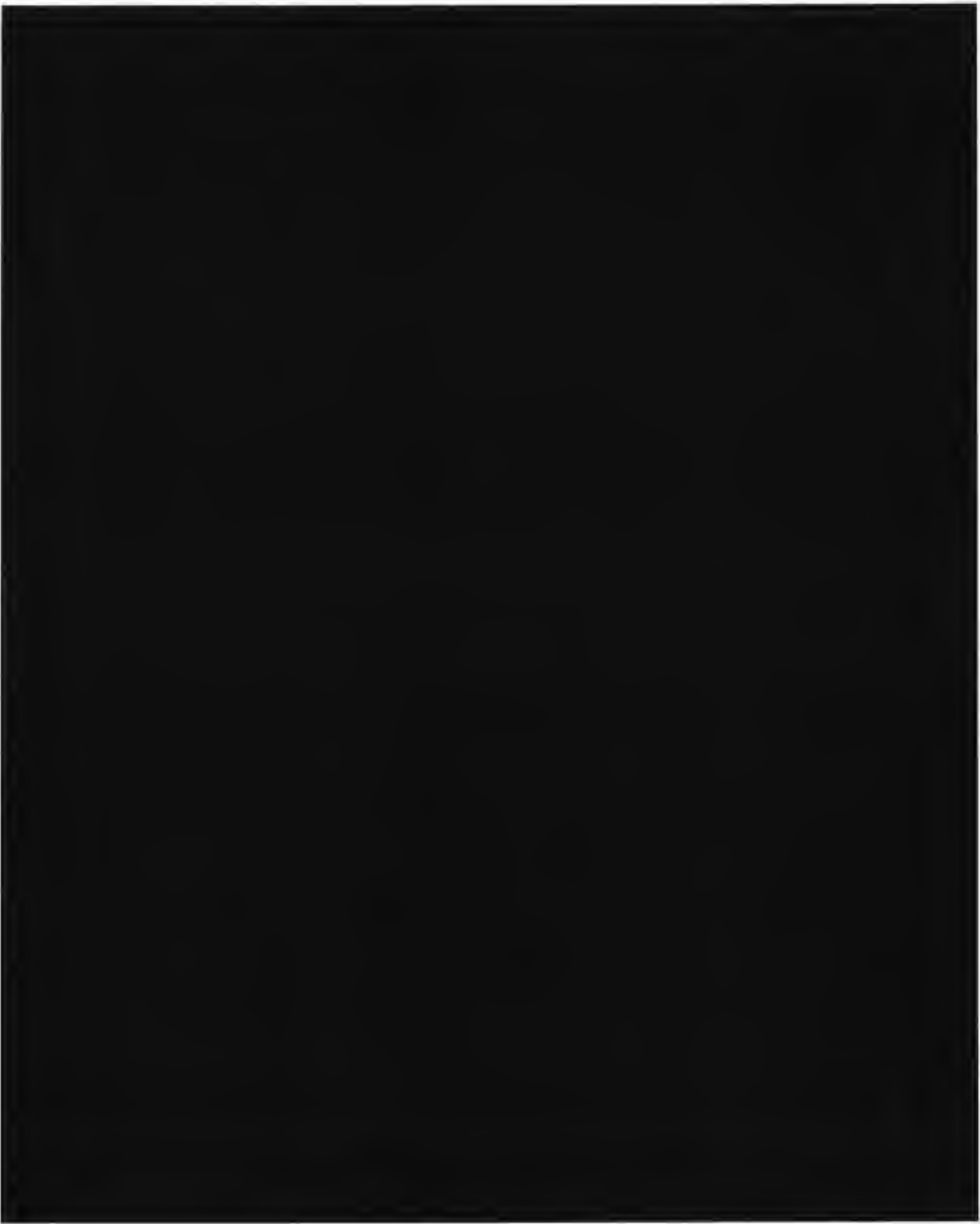
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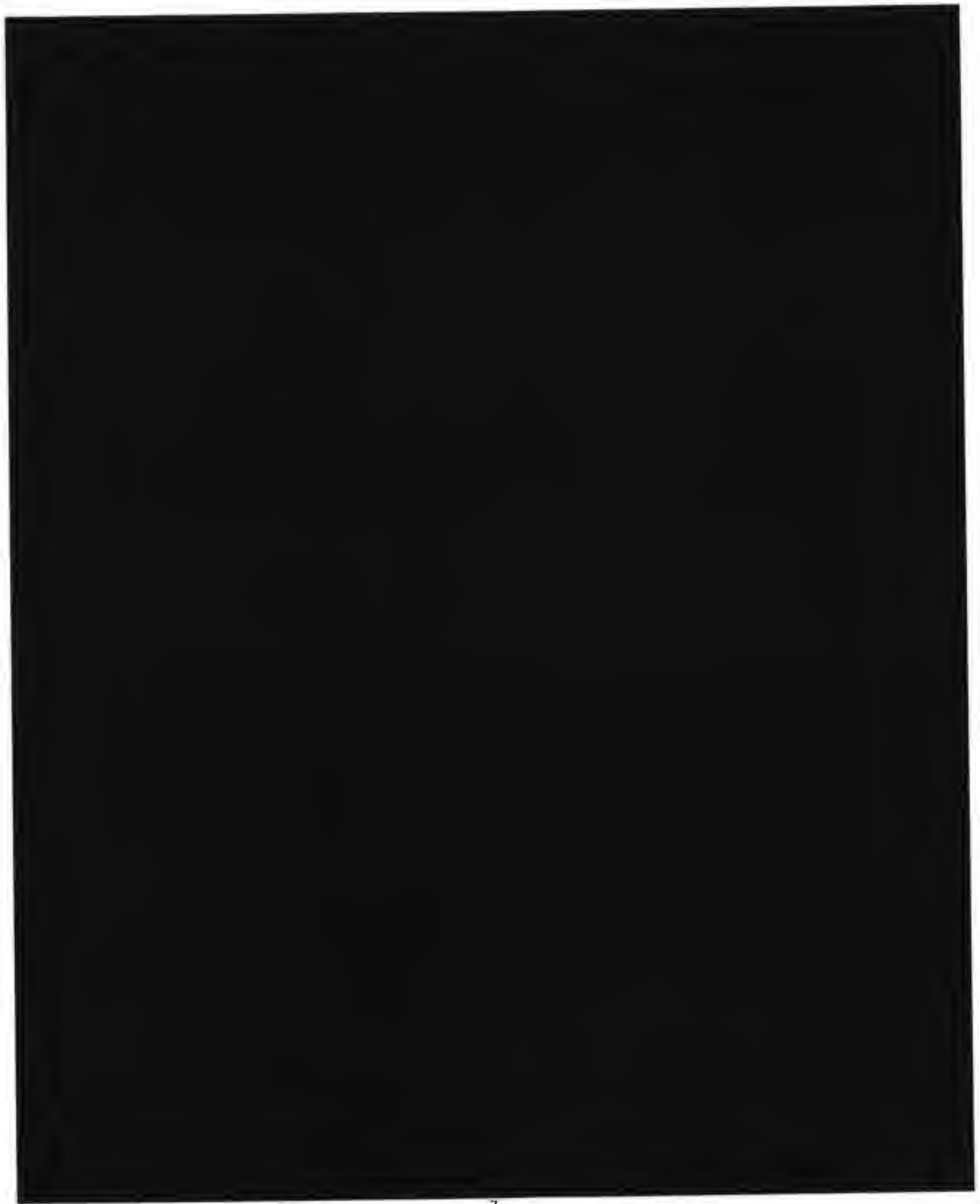
Marlan, Andrew M.

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Sent: Thursday, May 31, 2018 4:27 PM
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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1999. The public sector has become a major employer in the UK, and its growth has been a key factor in the overall growth of the economy.

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The research was conducted in a laboratory setting, using a sample of 100 participants. The participants were divided into two groups, each receiving a different treatment. The first group received a placebo, while the second group received the active treatment. The results of the study showed that the active treatment was significantly more effective than the placebo.

The findings of the study have important implications for the treatment of the condition. They suggest that the active treatment should be used as the first-line treatment for the condition. Further research is needed to confirm these findings and to explore the long-term effects of the treatment.

The study was funded by the National Institutes of Health. The authors would like to thank the participants for their contribution to the study and the staff of the laboratory for their assistance.

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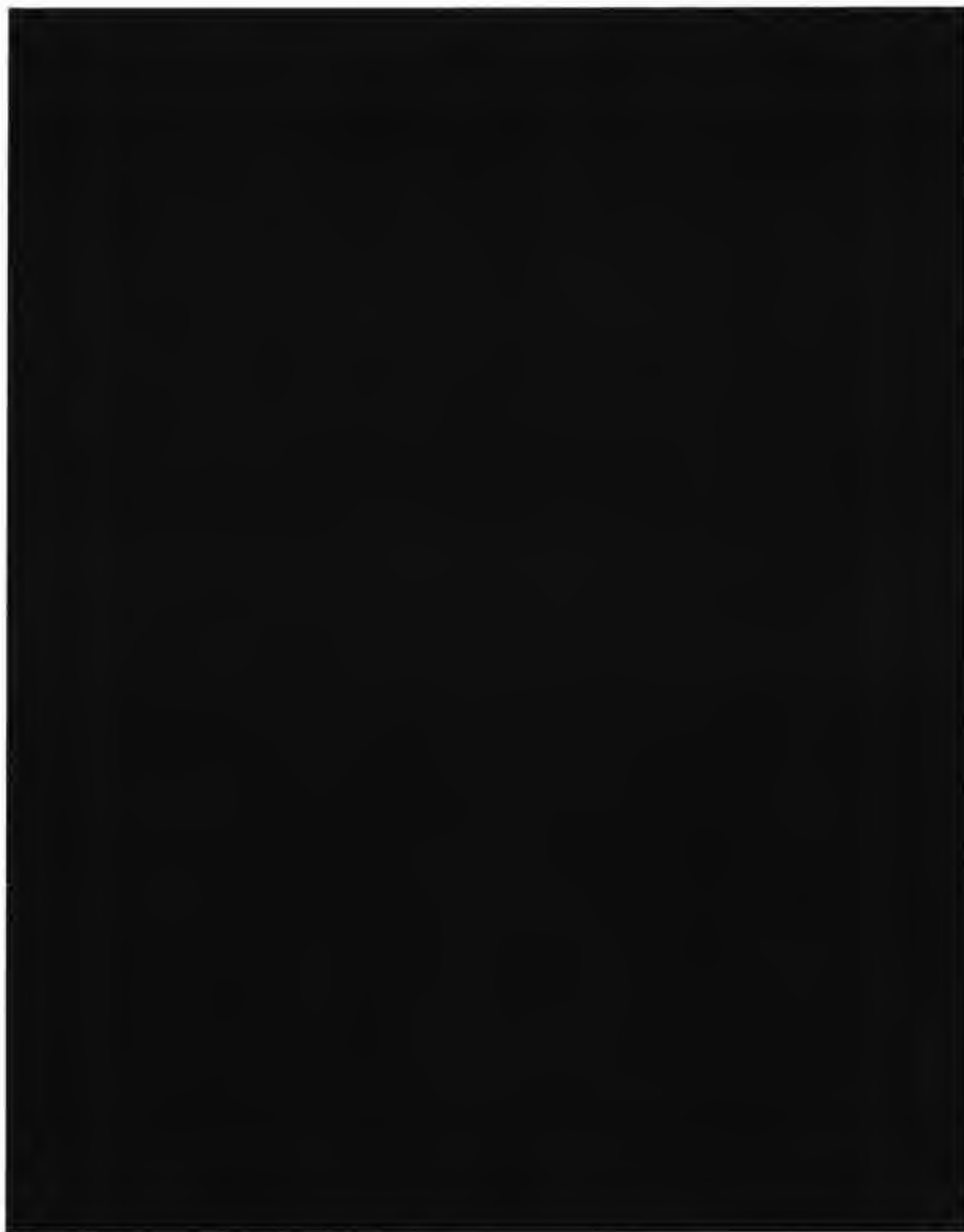
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The research was conducted in a laboratory setting, using a sample of 100 participants. The participants were randomly selected from a pool of volunteers. The study was approved by the local ethics committee. The data was collected over a period of six months. The results were analyzed using statistical software. The findings show that there is a significant difference between the two groups. This difference is attributed to the experimental conditions. The implications of these findings are discussed in detail. The paper concludes that the research has provided valuable insights into the topic. The authors hope that this work will contribute to the field and inspire further research.

the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased by 1.5 million, and the number of people aged 75 and over has increased by 1 million (Office for National Statistics 1999). The number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase to 6.5 million by 2011, and the number of people aged 75 and over to 3.5 million (Office for National Statistics 1999).

There is a growing awareness of the need to develop services to meet the needs of older people, and a number of initiatives have been developed to address this need. The Department of Health (1999) has published a strategy for older people, which sets out the government's commitment to improve the lives of older people. The strategy is based on three main principles: (1) to ensure that older people have the opportunity to live independently and actively; (2) to ensure that older people have access to the services and support they need; and (3) to ensure that older people are treated with respect and dignity. The strategy is being implemented through a number of initiatives, including the development of new services and the improvement of existing services.

One of the key initiatives is the development of new services to meet the needs of older people. This includes the development of new housing schemes, new care homes, and new community centres. The government is also investing in the development of new services to support older people in their homes. This includes the development of new services to help older people with their daily living, and new services to help older people with their health and social care needs.

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the 1990s, the number of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia has increased in the United Kingdom (Meltzer 1998). The prevalence of schizophrenia in the United Kingdom is estimated to be 1.2% (Meltzer 1998).

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the lives of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. The United Kingdom has a number of national strategies for mental health care, including the 1998 *Mental Health Act* (MHA) and the 1999 *Mental Health Strategy* (MHS). The MHA and MHS are both aimed at improving the lives of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. The MHA is a legal framework for the care of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, and the MHS is a strategy for the care of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. The MHA and MHS are both aimed at improving the lives of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

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The research was conducted in a systematic and rigorous manner, following the principles of good research practice. The data collected was analyzed using appropriate statistical methods, and the results were presented in a clear and concise manner. The findings of the study are discussed in detail, and their implications for practice and policy are explored. The paper is well-structured and easy to read, and it provides a valuable contribution to the field of research.

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The public sector has also become a major employer of women. In 1980, women made up 40% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 50%. This increase in the number of women in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of women in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people with disabilities. In 1980, people with disabilities made up 1% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 3%. This increase in the number of people with disabilities in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people with disabilities in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from ethnic minorities. In 1980, people from ethnic minorities made up 1% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 3%. This increase in the number of people from ethnic minorities in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people from ethnic minorities in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from the lower social classes. In 1980, people from the lower social classes made up 1% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 3%. This increase in the number of people from the lower social classes in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people from the lower social classes in the workforce.

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The public sector has also become a major employer of people from the lower health status. In 1980, people from the lower health status made up 1% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 3%. This increase in the number of people from the lower health status in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people from the lower health status in the workforce.

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